SON OF THE GODS

REX BEACH

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BOOKS BY

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SON OF THE GODS
DON CARELESS
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THE IRON TRAIL
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THE SILVER HORDE
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BY

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SON OF THE GODS

"Three things are universally acknowledged to be honorable: nobility, age, and virtue. In the courts, nobility holds first place; in the villages, age. Neither is equal to virtue."

CHAPTER I

IT WAS a warm evening in April. A week of sunshine had caused the first crinkled leaves to unfold: lawns and borders were richly green, crocuses were in bloom and the forsythia bushes were turning into spraying fountains of gold. Spring provokes a jocund excitement all its own: the marvel of rising sap, of swelling buds, of tender yet fiercely growing things awakens ardors, yearnings peculiar to that season of the year.

Sam Lee stood at the open window of his apartment overlooking the park, and the very fact that the window stood open gave him a feeling of freedom which amounted almost to intoxication. He was restless, eager, dissatisfied, elated: he debated irresolutely with himself whether to yield to the formless urge within him and ask Moy to fetch his polo coat, or to obey his conscience and call for his lounging robe. His notes on to-day's lectures needed elaboration but—it was spring; a gay rebellion had broken out in him, a thousand mischievous tongues were whispering in his ears, his thoughts were as unruly as wild horses. Who was it who defined a college lecture as a process by which the contents of a professor's notebook are transferred by mechanical means to a student's notebook without pass-

ing through the mind of either? No matter, it was a good definition and particularly true at this season of warm sap and bursting buds.

There was his brand new Hispano-Suiza standing at the curb below, positively rearing to go somewhere, anywhere, out into the fragrant evening. Sam could see it gleaming through the half-clothed branches of the elms, its sidelights glowing. It was desert sand in color, striped with white and upholstered in light leather—a "special job" that had awakened the envy of every undergraduate at Eastern. People invariably stopped to admire it and at this moment Sam could make out a group of dusky figures on the sidewalk near the car. He could hear their voices. Girls' voices! Laughter! Throaty exclamations! Intimate words!

Spring, he told himself, is a frame of mind. Good Lord! The idea of wasting time on "extensions of the binomial theorem" when one's mind is all itchy and when one's body is crawling with desires!

The telephone tinkled discreetly, then came Moy's soft "'Allo!" A moment and he entered the living room, bowed and announced:

"Mister Spuggum calling you, sir." Moy was a Korean: the simplest English names were baffling to him, he distrusted one and all and assumed no responsibility whatever for those that he was forced to repeat.

Sam went into the hall, took the instrument and spoke.

"Hello, Sam!" came a cheerful voice. "This is Spud Gorham. How's every little thing?"

"Fine, thank you."

"Are you working?"

"Not—yet. I was just getting ready ——"

"Say! There's some skullduggery afoot: I'm downstairs with Kicker and three does. He and I were on our way up to your place to borrow a fresh set of money when we startled these fawns. One of 'em's a pal of Kicker's. They're outside now petting your petting wagon. You'd better come down: we found a moth stamping around on it. They'll ruin the paint—I mean those moths."

Sam laughed and framed a pleasant comment, but Spud talked through his words:

"It's too nice a night for the movies and anyhow Kicker and I are down to our last pair of Camels. You sound like a fellow who'd enjoy taking us all for a ride. Girls and everything. Am I right? . . . Think of it, Sam: we couldn't make a borrow in front of them! You'll save money by going. . . . Aw, come on! They're nice Janes. They won't stick gum under the seats."

There was a moment of silence before Sam inquired:

"Are you sure it would be—all right?"

"Certainly!" Mr. Gorham spoke with heartiness. "Absotively oh kay! It'll be a polite expedition in search of scientific knowledge and no parking whatever. They'll have to be home early. Make

it snappy, Sam, before they change their alleged minds."

Sam Lee called for his polo coat and a few moments later he ran down the steps of the apartment house and joined the group on the sidewalk. He was greeted enthusiastically by Spud Gorham and Kicker Wade, who introduced him with something of a theatrical flourish to their three companions. The latter were no little impressed at meeting the owner of a fifteen-thousand-dollar car and Sam judged that Spud and Kicker must have told them who and what he was, for his arrival created quite a flutter. It was dark out here at the curb; features were suggested rather than revealed, but he could see that these young women were tastefully dressed and as pleasing in appearance as girls need to be nowadays. There were more than three thousand students enrolled at Eastern; nevertheless, Sam knew most of them by sight, but this trio was strange to him: he assumed, therefore, that they were merely dwellers in the neighborhood.

All of them addressed him simultaneously and in some confusion, at which Kicker said breezily:

"Don't let royalty rattle you, girls. Cut out the high voice and talk in the natural register. Sam is a timid, flickering spark and he wouldn't blaze if you fanned him."

"What a beautiful car, Mr. Lee." . . . "Aren't you afraid somebody will steal it?" . . . "How shall we ride?" . . . "It's the same make as that

car in *The Green Hat*. Didn't you *adore* the play?" . . . "I'm wearing a green hat, I'll ride with Mr. Lee. Unless one of you would prefer ——"

"Go ahead," Gorham addressed the last speaker the while he lowered the folding seats in the tonneau. "You're intellectual and so is Sam. He's the mental giant of the Sophomore Class and he does all our heavy thinking. Wait till he warms up the old cerebellum and explains the mysteries of the solar system, or thrills you with the principle of the mariner's compass. He's full of exciting gossip. Eh, Sam?"

Sam Lee's white teeth gleamed as he fitted his key to the lock and pressed the starter. "I'm not a gladiator at small talk," he admitted, "but I'm a thrilling listener."

"It makes me nervous to ride with a driver who talks too much," declared the girl at his side. "My, this car runs like silk, doesn't it?"

There followed a moment or two of general chatter during which each and every passenger undertook to make himself or herself heard. Then Wade gained attention:

"Say, people! How about some close harmonizing while we get better acquainted? Who knows the words to something? Anything? I'm a tiger on tunes but words bother me. I make up my own, 'Red hot mama! Red hot mama! Vo-do-de-o! Vo-do-de-o!' They fit anything. Come on! Somebody start a dirge."

One of the girls began to hum the chorus of a popular song and the others joined in.

After a while the girl at Sam's side—he believed her name was Hart, but he was not sure—inquired of him:

"Don't you sing?"

"Not well," he confessed.

"Goodness! Who does, outside of Italy? I can't keep up with the new songs. That's because I have no radio. There isn't room for one in my little room; it's about the size of a canoe. The real reason is I can't afford one." She laughed pleasantly. "I suppose you have a set?"

Sam inclined his head. "Most of the fellows have sets."

"What kind is yours?"

He told her and she gasped. "Oh, Mr. Midas! What haven't you got? A thousand dollar radio, a French car, an apartment of your own and a—a valet! Gee, I'd call that living. Where is your home, Mr. Lee?"

"New York."

"I'm a Westerner. . . . Bartonville, Ohio!"

Sam looked at her and again his teeth shone in a smile. "I was born in San Francisco," said he.

There was an interruption from the quartet in the rear. A moment and then Miss Hart addressed him in some curiosity:

"I thought wealthy fellows like you always put up at the frat houses."

"A good many do. I don't belong to any fraternity."

"I've been to some of the dances; one or two. I think it's terrible the way those fellows look at college. I mean as if it were all play. If they had any idea how hard it is to earn ——"

There came a gale of laughter from the back seats. Kicker, Spud and their two companions were talking like parrots.

A traffic policeman grinned and waved his hand at the silent running car and its noisy occupants. It was the warmest night this season and he wished he was in his "baby Lincoln" with the missus and the kid. What an evening for a drive. . . . Those youngsters yonder were out for a good time, a flask on every hip, no doubt, and he bet they'd give some bicycle cop a race before they docked. Those bicycle cops had it pretty soft: no flat feet for theirs. The way people sent their boys to college, nowadays. Minervas and Rolls Royces to play with! Where did all the jack come from, anyhow?

Through the upper end of the city and out into the country Sam drove. The roads were smooth and wide, the night was fragrant with pleasant, earthy odors. Youth itself on such a night is a delirious adventure.

Sam Lee felt enormously grateful to his two friends for inviting him to join their party. It was nice of them to admit him to such close fellowship with them and to introduce him to their girls,

for he was a pretty lonely person. It was nice of the girls, also, to treat him so graciously. Miss Hart, Alice was her given name, had quite recovered from her first constraint and was exerting herself to be agreeable. She no longer shrank over against her end of the seat as if he had measles: on the contrary, she took the wheel wherever the road was open and at such times her body pressed close to his, her shoulder rested against his chest. Her hands were soft and warm and velvety and when they touched his he was acutely conscious of unaccustomed sensations.

It would have been easy to slip an arm around her: probably she more than half expected him to do so for something of that sort was going on behind, but Sam had never put his arm around a girl.

A dog rushed out from a farmhouse gate and raced along beside the running board. It came with the intention of barking savagely but the speed of the machine was such that it could manage to emit nothing more terrifying than a falsetto yelp or two. Kicker Wade waved his cap and jeered at the animal as it fell behind, then with a sudden change of tone announced that he was hungry. He spoke as if he had made an important discovery which could not fail to electrify his hearers. But Gorham inquired irritably:

"Why bring that up?"

"How can I help bringing it up? *Sa-a-y!* Don't kick me! If you want to step on my foot, step on it

under a table with a napkin in your neck. That dog makes my mouth water: he started a sequence of thought. Remember Prof Austin's lecture on thought sequence——? But of course you don't. You don't remember anything. He calls it successiveness. 'Thought flows like a stream of water and one channel leads into another.' Follow me. Dog! Running dog! Dog overheated! Hot dog! Plural, hot dogs! . . . With *mustard!* Ain't culture wonderful?"

Kicker's girl companion uttered an exclamation. She hadn't tasted a hot dog in goodness knows when. Neither had the other girl, nor Alice Hart, for that matter. Food became the topic of conversation; starvation, it seemed, threatened more than one of the party. Somebody suggested it would be fun to get a bite somewhere and then dance for an hour.

Came another panicky protest from the bankrupt Gorham aimed at his pal Wade:

"Hunger is good for people. It sharpens their intellects and Lord knows yours needs it, Kicker. For me, I couldn't eat a thing. So help me!"

But Wade was shameless in money matters, financial obligations rested upon him as lightly as thistledown. With no hint of embarrassment he declared: "We won't press you, big boy. Live on your fat like a bear, if you will, but I famish. Having fasted since dinner time, my brain grows feverish, fancies come and go, visions pass before my eyes. Beautiful visions like those that tantalize the thirsty traveler

in a desert. Look! . . . I see a swell roadhouse. It's all lit up. There's music in the air. And smells! Smells of Welsh rabbits! . . . Do I dream? Is it all a cruel mirage? But no, six people are entering that heavenly roadhouse and I am one of them. They are led by a handsome, open-handed youth in a polo coat. Who is this princely fellow? Is it ——? . . . It *is!* It is—*Sam Lee!*" Above the laughter Wade went on in a hollow voice: "Are we his guests? I—can't make out. I think I see him lending me money to pay the check. Yes ——! And now the scene changes; comes the dawn. It is to-morrow. I am returning Sam's loan."

"There's no doubt, now, it's a mirage," Gorham asserted.

Sam Lee turned his smiling face to inquire: "What do you say if we go back the shore road and stop at the Bird Cage?"

This query brought a shout from Wade but half-hearted protests from the girls. Not the Bird Cage. That was altogether too spiffy. They weren't dressed for a place like that. Of course it would be wonderful just to see it but —— Wade who usually constituted himself a majority in any group broke in by declaring:

"It's a positive inspiration. You girls look like three plush horses, and anyhow Sam's known there."

"It's so—expensive," Alice Hart ventured.

"Pish! And two tushes! You're not with Spud and me, you're with Sam. He should worry about

the high cost of caviare with millions out at six per cent. My heart bleeds for that poor bonded bloat-holder."

Sam felt a certain embarrassment, especially as he was aware that Miss Hart was staring at him with new interest. Kicker was frequently embarrassing with his talk of money. It was characteristic of him to invite everybody to dine at another's expense, that was his way. He, and Spud, too, had practically been living off Sam's bounty for months, but what of it? Money could buy so little. What really mattered was the fact that these two fellows liked him, had accepted him as a friend and an intimate. They actually kidded him and introduced him to their girls. A feeling of gratitude absurdly out of proportion to its cause came over the driver of the car. He was no longer an outsider. He wished he knew how to joke as freely and as easily as these fellows, but his training had been different from theirs. He doubted if he could ever learn the secret of badinage.

The Bird Cage was the most popular roadhouse on the north shore. It had been done in the Chinese fashion, with miniature flower gardens and dwarfed pine trees surrounding the dancing floor and with tiny pebbled pools spanned by toy bamboo bridges separating the tables. Scores of bird cages, each with a twittering canary of imperial yellow, swung from the lacquered beams, and all the attendants were in Oriental costume. Smart people frequented

the Bird Cage for one of the best orchestras in the city played there nightly and the cover charge was high. That cover charge amounted to more than most of the students at Eastern spent on themselves in a week and in consequence it was not liberally patronized by the college crowd. But Sam went there frequently to dine alone.

He let his companions out under the porte cochère, parked his car and returned to the porch, then led the way inside. The three girls were chattering animatedly as he removed his coat and cap and tossed them to the coat man. He ran a hand over his shiny black hair and turned, smiling, to his guests.

It was his first chance to see them distinctly and he was curious to discover whether these friends of Spud's and Kicker's, especially Miss Hart, would prove as attractive in a revealing light as in the semi-obscurity of the night. He was not disappointed. They were healthy, charming, animated girls: Alice —Alice Hart—was unusually pretty. Sam had learned by now that she was an advanced student at the School of Design. That explained why he had never seen her on the campus, for Eastern's art school was in the heart of the city. Of the other two, one held a position of some importance in a publishing house and——

Sam felt his gaze drawn from Alice's face to that of Kicker's girl, perhaps his attention was attracted by the fact that she broke off in the middle of what

she was saying and stared at him out of startled eyes. A look of incredulity succeeded her smile! She opened her lips to speak but the obsequious proprietor of the Bird Cage bustled up at that moment with a word of welcome to Sam and an inquiry as to where he wished his party seated. When the latter had made his wishes known, the girls were on their way to the dressing room.

The orchestra in the café started playing, the dance floor filled and the three college men moved forward and looked in. Devoutly Gorham murmured:

"Heaven must be a roadhouse! Listen to that sax appeal!"

Wade shook his head. "In the beginning God made Heaven and earth. Mr. Volstead made the roadhouses."

"And *how!*" breathed the former speaker.

Sam Lee was staring at the gyrating throng, his face was placid, his eyes were as expressionless as onyx discs, he did not seem to hear what his friends were saying.

When several moments had passed, Wade inquired irritably: "What ails those sopranos? I require nourishment."

"Give a date free lip-stick and face powder and she'll stretch it into a permanent wave. I bet they've stopped to get shaved."

Wade felt a touch on his arm: a maid in an Oriental blouse, blue silk trousers and felt-soled slippers

advised him that one of the ladies wished to speak to him. He followed her.

A stormy face peered out at Kicker from the dressing-room door, an angry voice greeted him.

"You've got your nerve!"

"Hello! What's wrong?"

"You know very well. You get us out of here this minute before anybody sees us." The speaker was furious, her eyes were glowing. "The idea! Alice is crying. She's almost in hysterics and ——"

Illumination came to Kicker. "You mean—Sam? Aw, see here! Don't be a goofer."

"I recognized him the minute we got in here. If this is your idea of a practical joke ——" the excited young woman choked, "—— well, I think it's pretty rotten and I'm going to tell my father. The Regents will hear about this, Mr. Fresh, you see if they don't."

"But listen, dearie ——"

"Listen nothing! You get us out of here, that's all. The idea of your *daring* to take us out with a *Chinaman!*"

Spud Gorham's seatmate now revealed herself in the door opening. "That's what I say. I've got a brother and you'll hear from him."

"For Heaven's sake, be reasonable! Don't make a scene in a place like this," Kicker implored. "Sam isn't an ordinary Chinese."

"Bah!" . . . "What's the difference ——?"

"Anyhow we don't think of him as one. He's a

high-class gentleman. If I'd had any idea you felt like this —— But it's too late now. You've got to go through."

"And have him ask us to *dance?*" . . . "That's just what he'd do. I'd *die.*" . . . "Are you going to take us away?"

"I *can't.* Think I'm going to bawl myself out, and him, too? What would I tell him?"

"We should worry what you tell him."

Angrily Wade exclaimed: "You just want to start something. Who the devil do you think you are? The Astor girls? Sam doesn't look Chinese, and nobody here knows him."

"*I* know him!"

"Nasty yellow man! Ugh! I wouldn't let him touch me," the other girl put in.

"Is that so? Well, Alice let him touch her, all right! Everything was Jake till you started to broadcast. And he isn't yellow, either. But here's Spud ——"

Gorham had observed storm signals and was approaching: Sam Lee still stood in the doorway absorbed in watching the dancers. His back was to his guests.

When Spud learned what was amiss he joined his entreaties to Kicker's, but with no success.

"Do you think we'd be seen in a public place with an Oriental?"

"Yes, and his name isn't Sam Lee, at all: it's Lee Sam." The indignant instigator of the scene made

herself heard. "I never thought when you introduced him, but the instant I got a good look ——"

"Lee Sam is the Chinese way to say his name," Kicker explained. "They get everything backwards. Now listen: he's a big guy: his father is the richest Oriental in New York and he owns more stores than Carter has pills. He's the Chinese Marshall Field. Sam's a kind of a prince. He's an honor man at the university and ——"

"Are you going to call a taxi?"

"Is who going to call what taxi?" Gorham demanded roughly. "You'd wear out a new one on the way home. We're further from home than Cape Town. If you must go, Sam will drive us back."

"He won't drive *me* back."

"Nor me, either!"

"I should say not!" Alice Hart now added her voice to the others.

The two young men exchanged apprehensive glances, each waited for the other to speak. Spud finally began, "Well, *I'm* not going to break it to him. We asked him to take us out and we accepted his invitation to come here."

"'*We* asked him!'" snapped one of the girls. "Tell him somebody is sick! Dying! Anything!"

"I wish it was the truth."

Kicker nodded his complete agreement with Gorham's desire. "I'd like to tell him truthfully and with tears in my eyes that you all had hydrophobia.

I bet it would cheer him up. . . . All right! I talked us into this buggy ride, I suppose I can talk us out of it. Anyhow I'll try. But you ought to walk back." He and Spud returned to their host.

"Our party has blown up," Wade began as casually as might be. "Mabel has got something the matter with her and wants to go home."

Sam turned from his patient observation of the dancers and said politely: "I'm sorry. Can anything be done?"

There were times when Sam Lee's college mates argued that he looked not at all Chinese, and again times when they were not so positive about it. At this moment, however, there could be no doubt as to what he was: Spud and Kicker saw an Oriental facing them.

"Would she like to leave at once?" Sam inquired.

Kicker made a hopeless gesture. "At once, or sooner! And they want me to call a taxi."

"Too much air in that open car," Spud explained desperately. "It's—neuralgia, or toothache, or something. Grabbed her just like—that! At least ——"

"Would you mind ——?" Wade, in spite of his case-hardened nerve, hesitated, stammered. "Could I—er, borrow a ten spot until the first? I'll pay it back, this time. Honest!"

Sam smiled and took a new banknote from his bill-fold. He always carried new money, as his

friends had learned. "If she's suffering I'll ask you to say good night for me and express my regrets. You fellows must see them safely home, of course."

"This is mighty decent of you, Sam."

"You're a prince!" Both youths were greatly relieved. "Too bad our party was a bust, but —— We'll see you to-morrow."

As they crossed the lobby Kicker breathed to his friend, "Gosh, Spud! I feel as if I'd stamped on a baby's finger." A moment later they and the three girls passed out into the night.

Sam explained to the café proprietor that he would not require that table for six after all and for a while he continued to look on at the dancers. Outwardly he was unruffled, his face wore a faint smile, his eyes were stony: inwardly he boiled. In an effort to retain his self-control he repeated in a sort of panic: "The superior man can find himself in no situation in which he is not master of himself" . . . "Noble natures are calm and content" . . . "The lowest order of men are vicious in spite of instruction."

In moments like this he had learned to console himself, to seek refuge in the benign philosophy of the Orient. It had been a hard lesson: it was difficult to swallow abstractions, for he was young and a lively spirit blazed within him. He belonged to a people who have cultivated restraint and forbearance as virtues, nevertheless he was in revolt at this moment. Rebellion flamed through him, he was like

an electrically excited atom held in place only by the immeasurable force of a fixed habit of thought, a tradition, that had ruled four hundred million yellow men for four thousand years. . . . Here was still another spear thrust, another insult, he reflected: he had "lost face." With a desperate call upon his will power he forced himself to repeat: "By bearing with insulting persons I shall not fall into dishonor."

He had supposed, of course, when Gorham invited him to come out and assured him that everything was "all right," that the girls knew who and what he was. Otherwise he would not have subjected himself to the risk of humiliation. These Americans, these white people, with their airs and their prejudices! They were inexplicable. Who was the honor man among eight hundred sophomores at Eastern University? A despised Chinese! To whom did they look up in the lecture rooms? To whom did they come for help outside of class hours? To Sam Lee! . . . The gods were laughing. He, too, should laugh, but there was no laughter in him.

He stopped the blonde cigar girl as she passed him and bought a package of cigarettes paying double price for them. Disdainfully he left the change from his dollar bill on her tray. She dimpled and eyed him encouragingly. A white girl! When the coat-room attendant took his check Sam dropped a coin into his hand much as he would have dropped

it into the dirty paw of a beggar. The man was delighted.

There was a film over Sam Lee's eyes, a derisive smile was on his lips as he walked out of the café and climbed into his fifteen thousand dollar car.

"Resentment is a plant that bears nothing but misery," he told himself. A moment later he repeated a favorite proverb of his father's, "A wise prince never departs from gravity and repose."

Slowly he drove back towards the city, lost in meditative contemplation of the beauties of the night.

CHAPTER II

SAM LEE'S experience at the Bird Cage was not the first of its kind: he was by way of becoming accustomed to humiliations of one sort and another. Accustomed but not resigned; invariably he bled. These last two years had been the bitterest and the most discouraging of his life, for he had come to Eastern expecting to find a tolerance as broad as the ocean. Among his people the quest of knowledge is considered the most honorable of pursuits and respectful homage is paid to the humblest of students even by the high-born and the wealthy. In the Chinese mind intellect has dignity second only to old age. But he had found it to be quite different with Americans.

Sam's contacts in the classroom were pleasant and stimulating; an admirable democracy obtained there. It did not extend far outside of those limits, however, and he wondered why. He asked himself if he were not outwardly as clean, as fair, as prepossessing as his classmates, and inwardly as honorable and as virtuous as they. Candor prompted an affirmative answer to these questions. He was, moreover, the equal of these American boys, both mentally and physically. Why then did they look down on him, ostracize him, make him feel like a

pariah? This race prejudice never ceased to plague and to baffle Sam for he could not arrive at any good reason for it.

He had been taught to envision the world of knowledge as a real democracy which embraced every race, every creed and every color, he had thought of it as a sort of smooth, celestial meadow wherein the common language of culture was spoken and wherein people of higher intelligence—"those happy souls that dwell in yellow meads of asphodel"—mingled with each other in a spiritual brotherhood. Such at least was the picture that had been painted by his tutors.

In reality it was anything but that: he had found it to be a stony and inhospitable place, a bewildering confusion of compounds with race walled off from race and creed from creed. There were no streets, no market-places. There were no gates in the walls and they were too high to scale.

Sam had always been aware of a certain gulf between the white and yellow races, he had never been permitted to forget it, but he had considered it man-made, artificial, the result of ignorance and misunderstanding. Not until he came to Eastern had he begun to comprehend that it was something more than man-made and to appreciate how deep and how unbridgeable it really was.

It amazed him to learn that these Westerners not only shrank from physical contact with him and his countrymen, but also from social and intellectual

contact. It was the more extraordinary because they mingled with each other, regardless of race or religion—for example, Americans, Russians, Latins, Jews, Nordics, Arabs, Greeks and Red Indians. Chinese, it seemed, were regarded as another human species altogether, a species set apart and to be shunned. How absurd!

In Sam's case it did not appear to make the slightest difference that he was American-born, that he had never seen and probably never would see the land of his fathers, or that he had a "white mind": his virtues and his accomplishments were considered only skin deep. A Chinese he was: Chinese he must remain. It was the more bewildering to him because he sincerely admired American ideals and took readily to American customs, habits, language, everything. Even in religion he was as much a Christian as most of his acquaintances—at any rate in their professed beliefs there was nothing that did violence to his—but in spite of this he and they could no more blend than can oil and water. There was absolutely no absorption, no cohesion between them: nothing but a surface contact.

This phenomenon would have been more readily comprehensible had Sam conducted himself like the other Chinese scholars who lived at the House of Nations along with the hundred or more students of foreign birth. That little group of Orientals held itself aloof and avoided touch with the student body as much as possible. They liked the whites no bet-

ter than the whites liked them. But with Sam it was otherwise. He did not hold aloof: he was eager to adapt himself and to make friends. Nor did he presume in the slightest upon his ample means, except to live in accordance with his habits and his father's wishes. On the contrary, he was retiring and unobtrusive, he treated the humblest of his college mates with politeness and cordiality, he entered enthusiastically into every college activity which was opened to him.

For instance, he served diligently on class committees, a thankless and a profitless task: he wrote for the college paper, he subscribed time and money to every worthy cause. When the athletic fund dwindled he handled a drive to raise money and finally put it across with a sizable check of his own. This he did, by the way, under a pledge of secrecy.

More than one fellow he coached in those subjects in which he himself stood highest and there were a number of boys, like Gorham and Wade—they called themselves men, of course—who shamefully abused his generosity in money matters. He had even entered into American sports and had earned a place on the Varsity tennis team. "Earned" was the word, be it said. He had more than justified his selection. American sportsmanship struck him as a boastful phrase. When he outplayed one of his mates he was aware of a poorly smothered resentment not alone in his opponent but also in his audience, and referees were likely to decide close

points against him. The fellows tried harder to beat him than to beat each other. He was applauded reluctantly. To be quite fair, this partiality was manifest only on and about the campus; in team matches against other institutions he received his full share of cheers and of credit but that was the old college spirit at work and it meant little.

No, Sam occupied an anomalous position here at Eastern: he lived on a peculiar middle ground between that small group of Chinese students and the student body itself. The whites treated him as a Chinese, the Chinese refused to recognize him as one of their own. This may have been due in part to his father's wealth and prominence and to the fact that he had been raised like a Manchu prince, but whatever the reason, Sam had no place; he was made to feel like a renegade, a man without a country.

To-night as he drove homeward it seemed to him that he was the loneliest young man in the whole world and he took a melancholy satisfaction out of indulging in self-pity. He had been attracted by Alice Hart, no denying it. For an hour, hand in hand with her, he had trod the lotus path. Gates had opened, he had glimpsed enchanted gardens, then they had been slammed shut in his face. Race prejudice again! Physical repugnance! She could not bring herself to touch him.

Once before he had suffered a similar hurt. That was soon after his arrival at Eastern. He had at-

tended a social gathering and the memory of it still festered in his mind. He had never gone to another. Following that humiliating experience he had seriously considered quitting college and going home, home to his father's high-perched house that overlooked the roofs of Chinatown. Lee Ying, his honorable parent, lived in state on the roof of the newest, the tallest, the finest business building in that quarter of New York. A modern fireproof structure of steel and terra cotta it was: and the merchant's home itself was a peaceful refuge, rich in beauty and full of pleasantries. The rooms were airy and spacious and they housed many treasures. There was a roof garden with shrubs and trees and flowers and a tinkling fountain looking down upon narrow Mott and Pell and Doyers Streets with their swarms of yellow men and children. The home reflected the lofty dignity, the benignant calm of its distinguished owner. But the elder Lee was a sage and a philosopher; he was by nature and by training incapable of understanding resentment at harsh treatment, and Sam very well knew it. Lee Ying would have smiled at such a childish weakness and counseled his boy to rise above it: or told him that adversity is necessary to the development of a man's virtue. Virtue, by the way, was a fetish with the old man: the word was forever upon his lips. When he had sent Sam away to Eastern almost the last words he had said were:

"You are a Son of the Gods, Lee Sam, for they

sent you in answer to prayer, therefore it is incumbent upon you to cultivate the lowliest humility. Remember, when the prince goes to school, he is like other boys and if one treats him unreasonably he must say, 'I have been wanting in kindness or propriety, or how should this have happened?' Bear in mind also that the virtue of the Emperor is like unto the wind: that of the people like unto grass, and it is the nature of grass to bend when the wind blows upon it."

How could one go to a parent of such crystal clear wisdom and exalted sentiments with petty and undignified resentments? People had certainly treated Lee Sam unreasonably but the least he could do was to practice a philosophy as ripe as his teacher's.

All the same it did not lessen his growing contempt for the white people who considered themselves superior to him and who, nevertheless, were ready and willing to demean themselves by accepting his aid and his bounty. People like Gorham and Wade. And those three girls.

He determined to put to-night's experience completely out of his mind but it was not easily done. Alice had nice eyes and they crinkled almost shut when she laughed. Her skin was smooth, she was warm and vibrant. Sam could still feel her arm and shoulder pressed against his. There was a fragrance to her as heady as the perfumes of this April night. If only Wade had not suggested supper.

There was a throaty, intimate quality to Alice's voice which was queerly exciting and she could make you feel as if you had known her for a long while. Suppose he and she had been driving alone to-night! She had confessed that she was living a lonely, starved existence and felt a thousand yearnings—Two lonely people! April! An open road! Young blood!

Sam came to himself with a start to find that he had run past a crossing light.

Following that ride into the country Alice Hart asked herself a good many times whether she had behaved in a manner to reflect credit upon herself. She was not altogether certain but she did not believe she had, for try as she would she could not make herself feel as indignant as the other girls appeared to feel.

It had been an embarrassing situation, to be sure, and she was the person who had most cause for resentment, but Wade and Gorham were responsible: Sam Lee was no more to blame for it than she was. Of course no decent girl could afford to be seen with a Chinaman however rich and cultured he might happen to be—people were so ready to talk—and besides, there was something repulsive in the very thought of anything like intimacy between members of the two races. All the same, Alice felt a certain guilt at her part in the affair. If Mabel and Fay hadn't been so furious the difficulty

could have been met somehow. It was cruel to deliberately hurt people's feelings and doubtless Mr. Lee had feelings. As it now stood none of them would know precisely how to act the next time they met him. They couldn't very well refuse to recognize him and yet if they did not refuse—what then? He might presume upon his acquaintance. How much simpler it would have been to evade for the time being the consequences of Mabel's discovery.

Miss Hart, be it said, was given to evasions and avoidances: her whole life had been a series of painful compromises with disagreeable situations and she had learned how infinitely preferable is half a loaf to no bread. It is a lesson every ambitious person learns and she was ambitious. Ambition accounted for her presence here at Eastern for in a truly desperate effort to escape a life of household drudgery she had managed somehow to win a scholarship in Eastern's School of Design and now dreamed of a year or two in Paris, then a studio of her own in New York, and independence.

That scholarship, however, covered only tuition and inasmuch as her parents by no means warmly sympathized with her desires for a career it took a deal of wheedling, coaxing and even threatening, to keep herself in funds to meet living expenses. Of late her father was complaining about hard times, there was sickness at home and every week came hints that she was badly needed there. These she

resolutely ignored. She vowed to create for herself a future at whatever cost, but—that dream of Montmartre was becoming less vivid, more and more frequently the specter of a drab, uninteresting life in Bartonville rose to dismay her. There were times when she grew almost frantic at the thought of it and desperately envious of her acquaintances who were in comfortable circumstances. It seemed to her that she would do anything to escape Bartonville.

It had sincerely thrilled her to meet that unknown Mr. Lee, a man of fabulous wealth, and that evening with him had been an experience. Alice did not realize how keen was her disappointment at the outcome until several days had passed.

Mabel and Fay were working in the city and hence were usually in funds, once or twice a week they took her to the movies, standing treat in turn. At their next meeting the conversation, of course, was concerned principally with their adventure at the Bird Cage. Mabel was still devoutly thankful that she had recognized Sam Lee "in time," as she put it, and she seemed to feel that her alertness and her resource had saved them all from some unspeakable calamity.

"Has your father been to the Regents about it?" Fay inquired.

"Not yet. I haven't told him."

"I thought you were ——"

"Oh, I was! I was burning up. But Kicker is scared pink and begging me not to say anything!"

"You'd only get him and Mr. Gorham into trouble," Alice ventured. "Sam Lee was innocent enough."

"I suppose so. And the college authorities would be mighty slow in calling *him* down. Goodness knows how rich he is. All the same, it's a fine note when girls like us can meet a Chinaman and never know it. It was that car, of course. Imagine a *Chinaman* with a car like that! Why, *anything* could happen to a girl!"

"I'll say so," Fay agreed. "The trouble is you'd never know he's a Chinaman to look at him. Did you have the faintest idea, Alice?"

Alice shook her head. "I thought he was a little queer—he behaved himself so well. I wouldn't care to have the Regents or anybody else know that we went out with a fellow we'd just met. Would you?"

"Oh, *that!*" Mabel shrugged. "I guess they know what's going on. They're not so dumb. And I happen to know why the boys are so anxious to hush it up."

"Why?"

"They owe him money. Oodles of it. They've been living off of him. He just about supports a half dozen fellows. Kicker says he's a prince with his money. Simply throws it around and ——"

"The funny part of it is," Fay interrupted, "we wouldn't be mad at all if he was an honest-to-good-

ness prince. I mean even a Chinese prince. They have princes, don't they? We'd be all swelled up."

"I suppose so. And I guess he's richer than most princes at that. But—Gee! Could you let one of them *touch* you?" Mabel lowered her voice. "You know they're all crazy about white girls. A white girl can do anything with an Oriental. Jimminy Pops! They scare me."

Fay nodded her bobbed head vigorously. "I know! A girl at the office was telling me something—they have dance-halls right here, and in New York, too, where nobody but Orientals go. Magnificent places. And the girls are all *white!* . . . I wouldn't believe it but she says it's so and all these Hall of Nations fellows go there. I mean the Japs and Chinese and Filipinos. They pay *anything.* She told me all about it. *I* think it's *awful.*"

"I'll bet Sam Lee goes."

"I don't know. Spud said he doesn't go out with girls at all."

"Bah! With his money?"

"And he won't have anything to do with the other Chinese fellows, either. All his friends are white."

"That's because he looks like a white man. Well, if he's silly enough to lend his money to Kicker and Spud, I guess we can afford to keep quiet and let them spend some of it on us." Mabel laughed: plainly she had a practical mind.

That night as she lay in bed Alice Hart pondered

over what she had heard. How she hated always to be thinking of money matters but—it was terrible to be poor. Where was the justice in things? Here were Kicker and Spud, thoroughly able to earn their way through college, yet blessed with the friendship of an open-handed Oriental prince, while she struggled along on nothing. She couldn't even dress decently. Those fellows frittered away enough borrowed money to keep her in comfort. And what Fay had said about princes was true. If Sam Lee had a title tacked onto his name—— It wasn't as if he *looked* like a Chinaman, either, for he didn't. Any girl could afford to be seen with him, if people didn't actually know—— Why, in Washington the high-class Chinese went everywhere. They were ladies and gentlemen. Of course no girl could ever bring herself to *marry* one of them—although even that wasn't unknown. . . . "Crazy about white girls!" How awfully vulgar! But Mr. Lee wasn't vulgar: he was a perfect gentleman.

Sam was reading a Chinese story, one of the colorful folk stories which are repeated on the eve of the Feast of Lanterns. It was the humorous, lightly told tale of little Chin Ting, disconsolate daughter of Sun Hou the oil merchant, whose unfeeling parents locked her in the house with one dull lantern to console her while they went off to attend the New Year celebration. An audacious youth of the village, to whom the story teller attached the name

Fun, had concealed himself in a porcelain jar in Sun Hou's house and, after disclosing his presence to the daughter, impudently made love to her.

There were times when Sam took pleasure in turning to his Chinese books, both sedate and frivolous. To-night Moy was out so he had slipped into a purple robe embroidered with the mythical bird called Fung, a girdle of four agates and rubies and a cap adorned with a blood-red button, the which were emblematic of a Mandarin of the first rank. He had worn these symbols ever since boyhood and on evenings when he was alone he usually effected Chinese clothes as well as Chinese habits of living and of thought. It was then that he read from the vertical lines of ideographs on the pages of his native books.

In the literature of China little is made of women. They are playthings, creatures of amusement, greatly inferior to men: in stories they play a minor part, but this particular tale had as much to do with Chin Ting as with her frolicsome lover.

" 'If I were out of this jar, Oh Thousand Pieces of Gold, I could talk more freely.'

"Fun struggled to extricate himself but in vain. We know not how it was—he had got cramped, we suppose, and like the weasel in the fable he could not obtain egress at the hole by which he had entered. Thus unfortunately situated, he appealed to Chin Ting for assistance: and this, after some hesitation, she accorded. By dint of much struggling

upon his part, and by energetic handling of his pig tail on hers he finally got free to the waist: but there occurred another hitch, which all their endeavors failed to overcome. At last by stamping violently Fun broke out the bottom of the jar, and thrusting his legs through regained in part his locomotive powers."

There was a certain subtlety to these simple old stories, Sam reflected. Many girls found themselves locked in against pleasures, like hapless Chin Ting, and many boys were walking about with their bodies in jars.

Motives in these ancient tales were invariably pure: Fun's only desire was to have the comely Chin Ting to wife. His eloquence, her resentment and her desire to see the fireworks prevailed over the hesitations of an inexperienced girl: in an amusing manner the story told of the elopement, the visit to the public square where the celebration was in progress and of the meeting with Chin Ting's father who was strutting about with a long bamboo fastened to his back by a cord, to the end of which was suspended an enormous lantern. Chin Ting had disguised herself with a heavy veil but greatly to her alarm her mischievous lover insisted upon engaging his father-in-law-to-be in conversation.

" 'Methinks,' said Fun, 'your Humble Servant has the honor of addressing that very illustrious Sun Hou who lives in the conspicuous corner house of

the highly magnificent lane called the Alley of the Salted Sturgeon.'

" 'Your venerable servitor,' answered Sun Hou with affected humility, "bears that very ignoble name and dwells in the place you mention. May he ask your most honorable title?'

" 'The continually-to-be-sneezed-at name of your Humble Servant,' said Fun, 'is Fan-Si. I just now slunk along by your most noble dwelling and had the little deserved honor of beholding your pile-of-volumes son and your string-of-rubies daughter at the window. Your Humble Servant wondered greatly that they came not hither to make the lamps burn more brightly.'

" 'Of a truth,' responded Sun Hou, "had more of my oil been used, the illumination would have been more luminous. But son have I none, though I have a disobedient slip of a daughter.'

" 'It was then perhaps your full-of-dessert daughter's most profoundly-to-be-reverenced husband? . . . I am certain that I beheld, with my one-bigger-than-the-other eyes, two persons ——— ' "

Sam lowered the book, for his telephone was ringing. He glanced at the ormolu clock on his cabinet of tiny ivory and gold and porcelain curios. It was after eleven. Who could be calling? Amid a soft rustling of silks he went into the hall. A woman's voice answered his hello.

"Don't you know who this is?" it inquired. "This is Alice Hart speaking."

Sam all but dropped the receiver.

In some constraint they exchanged meaningless greetings and pleasantries. Alice had spent a quiet evening in her room: it had occurred to her that she had failed to thank Sam for his courtesy on the occasion of their meeting. She hoped he wouldn't consider her rude.

Sam asked himself in bewilderment if he could have misconstrued the meaning of that episode at the roadhouse. Was it possible that Miss Hart did not understand? It seemed incredible, and yet—how account for her friendly tone of voice? Embarrassment smothered him: he must spare her feelings.

"I was reading when you called," he told her. "An old Chinese story ——"

"What about?"

"About a little Chinese girl who was not allowed to attend the Feast of Lanterns—our New Year celebration. We Chinese attach great importance to New Years: it's our principal holiday. Something like your Christmas or Fourth of July."

"Why wasn't she allowed to go to the feast?"

Sam hesitated. Miss Hart knew. She knew everything and yet she called him up, wanted to chat. Here was a miracle. A new resonance, a new quality was in his voice when he said:

"Poor little Chin Ting's parents were unkind, they locked her in the house while they went off to the festival. But a boy of the village, who of course

loved her, managed her escape and they saw the lanterns and the fireworks and had a wonderful time together."

"Hm-m! It sounds like an ordinary American story. I suppose there's more to it?"

"Oh, naturally! It's quaint and amusing, in the original script."

"Do you read Chinese?" Miss Hart was incredulous.

"Of course ——"

"But isn't it awfully hard? Doesn't it take years to learn?"

"Years and years. I couldn't speak English until I was half grown!"

"*No!* Isn't that extraordinary? You certainly speak it well enough now: better than I do." There was a pause. "I wish I knew more about—well, about foreign people and countries and customs and such things. I'm terribly ignorant and curious. All I know is a little bit about drawing. . . . Was Chin Ting pretty?"

"Lovely!" Sam laughed. It was perhaps the first time he had ever laughed naturally while talking to an American girl.

"I suppose the young man called her his lotus flower?"

"No: his Thousand Pieces of Gold ——"

"How pretty!"

"—and his String of Rubies. When Chin Ting's father learned that she had gone to the festival

against his command he wanted to boil her in oil. But her mother was more tender-hearted: she wished only to boil her daughter's hands therein."

"I'll bet! Parents are pretty much alike. I ran away from home to see the fireworks."

"Indeed?"

"Sure! The trouble is I'm not seeing them. The nearest I've come was—the other night. I had an awfully good time while it lasted." Alice seemed to think, of a sudden, that she was overdoing her thanks or was talking too freely for after another hurried word or two she said good night and hung up.

Sam read no more that evening. What did that friendly telephone conversation signify? Was Miss Hart unlike other American girls? She must be. What did she mean by likening herself to Chin Ting? Well, he was a good deal like the village youth in the story, too, for he was encased in a jar. . . . Fun had finally smashed the jar. . . . Would he dare ring up Miss Hart after a proper lapse of time? How long should he wait? There is nothing in Chinese etiquette about telephoning young ladies. But this wasn't China: it was America. And he was an American. . . . A moment and he shook his head at this reflection. He was nothing of the sort. He was a "Chink." . . . But at least he could send her some flowers. Of course! No possible offense in that. Magnificent flowers, too: she must learn that he did everything in a princely manner.

CHAPTER III

A MONTH had passed. Trees had leaved out. The side street where Alice Hart roomed was dark at night for the branches of its elms met overhead and cast heavy shadows along the curb. Sam Lee stopped his car midway of the block and waited. Residents of the street who may have commented earlier upon the regular comings and goings of the sand-colored Hispano-Suiza no longer did so, for they were accustomed to it now. Two or three evenings a week it appeared, picked up a passenger and slipped silently away: when it returned nobody knew.

Alice was prompt, as usual, she materialized from the gloom, seated herself at Sam's side, and they were off.

In a breathless, earnest voice she thanked him for some gift he had sent her that day. "You're too extravagant," she declared. "Honestly, you embarrass me, Sam. I—I don't know what to do with you."

"Did you like it?"

"You *know* I liked it. But how did you cultivate such taste in women's things? A girl should distrust any man who can select dresses. It's an indication of bad character."

Sam laughed, his companion drew her shoulders together, hugged herself, nestled closer to him. It was a friendly, intimate affectation to which she yielded when she was highly pleased.

Following that first telephone call Sam had sent Alice a box of flowers: they were the finest, the longest stemmed roses she had ever seen. A gift so expensive demanded acknowledgment, so she had called him again. They had chatted at greater length this time and somehow she had mentioned that car of his. In answer to his diffident invitation she had said of course she would enjoy a ride, any evening. That had been the beginning. Sam was not doing so well in his studies now as heretofore but he was happier and more contented than at any time since coming to Eastern and he was getting to know the roads outside the city by heart.

Alice's work at art school was confining: she was a country girl and she loved fresh air. These restful excursions had proved a blessed relief and she often declared it was nice to have a friend like Sam. Not a Spud Gorham or a Kicker Wade, but a dependable, solid, comfortable friend who possessed a serious mind and who respected girls.

Alice talked a good deal about her work, her ambitions and her sacrifices: Sam learned something about Bartonville and its disdain for the finer and more significant things of life, that is to say the lasting, soul-satisfying things like literature, culture, manners, art. Miss Hart was always in deep earn-

est about her art, but other matters she treated more lightly, and usually she was full of fun. There was a distinct charm about her for she had a curious knack of talking confidentially about herself and her personal concerns, and of showing the warmest interest in other people's affairs. She was some indefinite number of years older than Sam—even two or three years at their time of life constituted a considerable disparity in age—nevertheless, she deferred to his wisdom in a flattering manner.

Their friendship had proven very wonderful, deeply intoxicating to the boy: it had expanded him, he was a different person. For one thing he had learned to dance and that involves a distinct metamorphosis in any young man.

Alice had treated him with an odd mixture of friendliness and constraint, at first: she had appeared to be attracted to him, nevertheless she had been suspicious, fearful of his advances. When he failed to make any, her shyness wore off and they became real pals. She was at all times eager to go out with him but diffident about being seen in public places and explained this on the ground that she lacked the means to dress becomingly. A girl who couldn't afford to look well couldn't afford to be seen publicly, she told him.

One evening, however, she did consent to go with him into a small clam chowder place where they were not likely to be recognized and there they discovered an orchestrion which played discordantly

when nickels were fed to it. Alice was surprised to learn that Sam could not dance and she volunteered to teach him; thereafter they dropped in whenever they passed the place. It was great fun and Alice declared he was rapidly becoming one of the best dancers she knew, if not the very best.

Pleasing as she was in most ways, the girl possessed one characteristic which disappointed Sam, she had a discontented mind and suffered periods of intense despondency: she was likely to break out in a vitriolic and utterly reasonless tirade against her luck, her condition, her lack of opportunity. It was a part of her frankness. Poverty, to her mind, was more than a misfortune, it was a disgrace, it carried a stigma. She did not appear to be actually envious, she merely had an insufferable longing to possess as much as other girls had and to feel herself their equal. This feeling of inferiority, amounting almost to a complex, mystified Sam, for he had never known the pains of self-denial, and poverty in Chinese eyes is no social bar sinister—not even a handicap. When he made this plain to her, she was surprised, she could not believe that he was in earnest or that he could cherish any real regard for her, a mere nobody. To be sure, she was a student, an intellectual, an artist, but what of that? Those things might count in China but not here.

Although she always appeared to Sam neatly and tastefully dressed, she nevertheless was overconscious of her poor appearance so he began giving

her little luxuries which he felt sure she could not afford to buy; a box of lacy handkerchiefs, for instance, or a few pairs of gloves, silk hose and the like. When she protested he assured her they were mere trifles.

"Trifles to you, a wild extravagance for me," she told him.

"I'd love to enjoy the feeling of extravagance," he confessed. "It must be a lot of fun."

"Don't you *know* how it feels to spend more than you should?" He shook his head. "I can't say that you've missed much, but—imagine such a thing! Oh, you lucky dog! . . . Really, Sam, you mustn't give me things to—to wear. Candy and roses are all right, but—there's a difference."

"In what way?"

"I don't know. Somehow. Isn't it silly? It's perfectly good form to send a girl like me an armful of American Beauties at how-much-a-dozen when —well, when she's wearing cotton lingerie, but it's all wrong to send her a lace step-in." The speaker laughed bitterly: a moment, then with sudden passion she cried: "It's rotten! Sometimes I get desperate, always wanting, always doing without. Oh, I *hate* it!"

"What do you hate? What do you want?"

"*Everything!* I want to *be* somebody, *have* something. If you've never been poor and dissatisfied, how can I explain?"

Sam smiled faintly. "It seems to me you have so much."

"In Heaven's name what? Health, youth, a fair amount of good looks. How much will they bring? . . . But—there! I shouldn't let you know what a sour, disagreeable person I am. I should act like a —like a Chinese girl. Then you'd admire me and——"

"How does a Chinese girl act?"

"How——? Why ask me? I never saw one."

"Nor I."

"What?"

"I've never seen a Chinese girl—that is to say, a well-born girl, a lady, like you. Coolie girls, middle-class girls, yes——"

"'Well-born!' 'A lady!'" Alice tossed her head derisively. "I'm an American coolie girl. A cheap peasant with expensive longings."

"The quest of knowledge is the most honorable of pursuits. You'll be a great artist."

"Never! Why? Because I won't have the chance. It takes time and money to become an artist. I'll go back to Bartonville with a smattering of art, just enough experience to make me hate everything else, and go to keeping house, cooking, washing, playing nurse-girl. I can see it coming and —I'd rather die."

"We have a proverb which runs, 'The more unlikely I am to be successful, the more diligently will I study.' It's quite a fine thing to be steeped in the

sayings and the philosophies of an ancient, thoughtful people: it's a short cut to experience. We Chinese children are taught stories, as well as apothegms, and many of them have to do with scholars who acquired culture, made much of themselves, under difficulties infinitely greater than yours. They're a spur to diligence: one of the very first stories we're told is about the boy who had no money for a lamp and caught fireflies to light the pages of his book."

"Your stories, I notice, are all about boys."

"There are too many women in China."

"There are too many women everywhere, and I'm one of the surplus. No fireflies come our way. We dream of—Paris, Life, and go back to our Bartonvilles and our patent wringers." Again the speaker uttered a resentful sound.

Following this conversation Sam made bold to present Alice with gifts somewhat more substantial than theretofore. To-day he had sent her a dress, and in view of her ardent gratitude he took occasion, later in the evening, to broach another matter to which he had given much thought. He began cautiously by telling Alice something about his father. He had never said much about Lee Ying but to-night he informed her that the importer was a man of wide but unobtrusive charities. Lee Ying did much to help those deserving of assistance, regardless of race: he was deaf to no appeal. It was his money, for instance, which the speaker lent so lib-

erally to the boys who honored him with their friendship and his father approved of the loans. The old man was forever urging his son to do more for those less happily situated than he, arguing that help at this time might be of inestimable value to them in later life. Sam wondered if Alice would take it amiss if he offered her the same sort of assistance he rendered fellows like Gorham and Wade.

"You mean—money?"

"Exactly. Understand, it's not mine, it's my father's. He considers it a privilege to aid any one engaged in the pursuit of a higher science."

"I couldn't do that," Alice exclaimed hurriedly. "I feel wretched enough at letting you do as much as you've done. I—think I'd die if anybody found it out. Please don't tell him anything about me: I don't want him, or anybody, to know."

"Have you told your people about me?"

"Good Lord, no! They're only looking for an excuse to send for me."

After a moment Sam announced gravely: "Under the circumstances, I'm afraid we'll have to give up these rides. I'd never forgive myself if I were to cause trouble between your family and you."

"Oh, Sam!" Alice laid a hand upon his arm and looked up into his face. "Don't you *want* to see me any more?"

He assured her quite honestly that he did want to see her, that he wanted to see as much of her as

possible. He could not tell her how much her friendship had meant to him. "I'm the loneliest, hungriest fellow in the college, and I find nothing incongruous or improper in our friendship. But I'm not blind. I understand why you meet me in the darkest spot on your street: why you refuse to go out in public with me. It's a hard thing to swallow."

For a while they rode in silence, then Alice inquired: "Is it my fault any more than yours?"

"No. It's the fault of a senseless, formless prejudice which I hate because I can't understand it. For that matter, I hate clandestine things, too. We can't go on like this."

"Why not?"

"For one thing I have a pretty stiff Chinese pride and for another I've been taught filial obedience. You owe it to your people to observe their prohibitions."

"Indeed! . . . You remember that girl in the Chinese story? Chin Ting, wasn't that her name? Well, her people forbade her to go to the Feast of the Lanterns but the boy contrived her escape. Clandestinely. I guess people are pretty much alike, the world over, Chinese or American. . . . It's rather exciting to be clandestine. There's a kick in it." Alice laughed in her intimate, "cozy" tone and leaned closer to her companion. His heart pounded at her touch. "Don't let's get prudish in our old age, Sam. I'm not going to give you up. Not for

some silly principle—some foolish prejudice. I'm too selfish."

A trifle thickly he told her, "I must either see more of you or—very much less."

"Very well, but with things as they are we can't go out in public —— Oh, gulp down that Chinese pride of yours! *One* of us must be practical. I've learned to look facts in the face if you haven't. . . . I used to be afraid of you—most fellows are so fresh when they get out alone with a girl ——"

"How can we see more of each other?"

"I'm thinking— . . . That valet of yours ——"

"Moy?"

"Can you trust him? I mean, would he talk if—if I came to see you? . . . If you can't call on me without causing comment why shouldn't I call on you?"

"Would you ——?"

"I don't know. If people persist in being so silly, must we let them interfere with our friendship? What they don't know won't hurt them. . . . Sam! I want to see the lanterns."

During the month preceding the close of the spring term Alice spent several evenings in Sam's apartment. She reveled in her boldness, the adventure delighted her, at the same time she was watchful, suspicious of him. When he treated her with the same unfailing courtesy that he had displayed on their automobile jaunts and took no advantage what-

ever of the situation she had created her distrust disappeared, she abandoned herself to a triumphant enjoyment of her exploit and assumed a sort of gay proprietorship over him and Moy and the place itself. She took a hand in running it and the perilous nature of her escapade gave it a keener edge. Sam would have found as much or more joy in meetings less surreptitious, for men are not as reckless as women, but he had gone too far to retreat. He was human, be it said, but in spite of the fact that it was an effort to play the punctilious host at all times, he managed it somehow. He entertained Alice as he would have entertained any honored guest, he provided food—rare delicacies which she enjoyed with the immoderate appetite of one denied the simplest luxuries—he read to her and he amused her in accordance with her moods. His quarters were filled with objects of Oriental art, anything she admired he gave to her. That was his Eastern way and a very pretty practice she considered it. He was ever obliging: when she wished to talk he talked, when she was blue he made her laugh with antics and absurdities. He could do many mystifying tricks of legerdemain and she called him a wicked magician: she was surprised to learn also that he was a musician of sorts and could play a number of instruments passably well. He could even improvise words, like a medieval minstrel, and sometimes he put on his Chinese robes and sang Chinese songs,

some of his own making, to the accompaniment of a long-necked Chinese banjo.

That which delighted her above all, however, was to have him perform on a slim little silver pipe, or flageolet, which gave forth thin, flutelike tones. The liquid notes would ripple from it and then, right in the middle of the melody, Sam would slip the instrument over his ear and continue to wiggle his fingers while the same notes issued from his lips. It was a fascinating accomplishment and Alice often told him he would be the most popular boy in Eastern, socially, if people knew him as well as she did. They'd have him in the dramatic club.

As the spring semester drew to a close Alice confessed that her plans for the future were uncertain and as a consequence she was in a painful quandary. Her parents expected her to return home, but she knew very well what that would mean—the end of her career. On the other hand, she could not remain in the East unless she found employment for the summer and positions were rare. She was greatly depressed.

Sam spoke again of a loan but she would not listen to his suggestion. It was unthinkable: she still retained some self-respect. After all, what would another year in the art school profit her without a finishing course abroad? She was no heaven-sent genius. She had not sprung full-grown from the brow of Jove. With proper preparation she was certain she could make a moderate success for she

had the capacity for hard work and infinite pains—fair substitutes for actual talent—but that was all she could boast of. It was pretty discouraging. The worst of it was she and Sam would never see each other again. No more rides, no more chats, no more cozy evenings like this. . . . Oh well! The world is full of mediocre talent, rusting out on side-tracks: the tragic figures in life are the misfits, the people who are forced into grooves where they don't belong. It was all very well to talk about sacrifice, the stony road to success, but what more could she sacrifice? What more had she to give? . . . "Fire-flies!" It takes a lot of fireflies to light the road to Paris. . . . Poor Chin Ting! How she had longed to escape from her prison.

"You can see the Feast of Lanterns if you wish," Sam told her gravely.

"How?"

"By stopping over in New York for a week and allowing me to show you about."

"New York is too expensive for a Bartonville art student."

"I would consider it a privilege to entertain you as my guest."

Alice eyed the speaker in startled interrogation. She had been leading up to some offer of this sort, and yet she was reluctant to hear it put into words for fear of what it would inevitably imply. With a flutter in her bosom she waited for him to go on.

"You could go to some hotel—the very nicest—

and nobody need know that you're my guest. I'll hold myself at your service, take you to the shows and the shops ——"

"It would be lovely!"

"—and perhaps you would enjoy meeting my father. I want him to know you. He's a learned man, a philosopher, a person of importance. Very likely he could put you in the way of securing a position for the summer."

"Oh, *Sam! Would* you ——? I've always wanted to see the New York shops. A position! You *are* a magician: you're a prince out of a fairy book. No. You're just a plain darling. Why, it may mean the chance I've been looking for. . . . Sam, dear!" The speaker clasped her hands and strained at them, her voice grew husky. "I'll never, *never* be a misfit. Don't let me go back to Bartonville and—rust out on a sidetrack. *Please!*"

That car of Sam Lee's excited quite as much admiration on Fifth Avenue as it had excited on the college campus: wherever it stopped people gathered to look at it. Alice Hart felt something stir inside of her when she and Sam came out of Lord and Taylor's and stepped into it, she did her best to look rich and haughty and meanwhile she envied her companion's complete oblivion to the stares he evoked. It was an experience to be stared at, to be seen in company with a young man as perfectly groomed and as important as Sam Lee. Nobody

seemed to take him for a—for a foreigner. That was the most amazing thing about a great city like New York, nobody knew anything about anybody, or cared enough to inquire. They minded their own business. Nothing mattered here except money. It was about all that mattered anywhere.

Sam had been a few minutes late in calling for her that morning—their first in New York—and the overdressed hotel starter had treated Alice with lofty disdain until the Hispano-Suiza drove up. Then what a change. What servility. Several times, since leaving the hotel, she had noted with the supersensitiveness of a person sailing under false colors just what a fifteen thousand dollar car signifies here among these temples of Mammon. Gorgeous attendants ignored less pretentious cars and let their occupants wait or get out unassisted while they opened the door for—Alice Hart of Bartonville. They bowed and touched their caps to her.

Sam, she learned, had a subtle, unobtrusive way of commanding attention in the stores themselves, he was recognized as a somebody and his name was magic. Black magic, to the country-bred girl.

They had spent the morning sightseeing, in reality window shopping, for that was Alice's wish. Sam had shown her through art stores, silversmiths, antique shops at first, for his taste ran to exquisite thing like bronzes, jewels, ivories and such, but she did not begin to enjoy herself thoroughly until they

entered the stores given over to fashionable women's things. Thereafter she was in raptures.

They lunched together: for tea they visited a place she had always longed to see and they lingered there. Soft music. Rich rugs and hangings. Crystal and silver and bronze and gilt. The hum of cultured voices, care-free laughter, the atmosphere of opulence and extravagance; obsequious waiters, thin china, high-priced viands. Prodigious pyramids of hothouse fruits. Banks of roses. Perfume. Words of French. All these things awed and delighted Alice but she almost hated them, too, because they were unattainable. How drunk she could become on them if they were hers to enjoy. . . . At Bartonville the afternoon mail was in. . . . Sam Lee didn't *look* like a Chinaman. He looked more like a Spaniard or an Italian. Or a Rumanian, a Greek, a Russian—anything: one foreigner was about like another to Alice. How wonderful if —— He was the dearest creature, really, and the nicest thing about him was his formality. He had never even tried to kiss her. But Chinese didn't go in for kissing, thank Heaven! . . . She wondered if they really had feelings like—well, like white men.

How nice it was to be in a place like this, how wonderful to afford to come here often. If she were an artist she could afford it. This was living. Yes, and Sam had seats at the most popular show in town for that evening.

When she returned to her room she received the

culminating surprise of that gala day. On her bed were a number of packages from the shops she had visited and when, with trembling fingers, she opened them she found they contained all, or practically all, of the lovely things that she had most enthusiastically admired on their sight-seeing tour. Here was a dinner dress, there an evening wrap, yonder a sport costume, a beaded bag, a hat—! Incredible. Alice gloated over them like a miser, her heart beats choked her. This was like Sam: he did everything regally. What extravagance! Why, she was rich! One of these garments had cost more than her whole wardrobe. Feverishly she stripped off the simple dress she wore and tried on this new finery. She owed it to Sam to look beautiful to-night but meanwhile she must indulge her consuming vanity, steep herself in the ecstatic pleasures of self-adoration. She had intended to have dinner in her room —Sam was dining with his father—but her appetite fled as she posed and postured before her mirror. . . . Paris did not seem so far off at this moment as heretofore. . . . "Crazy about white girls." Where had she heard that? Oh, yes! . . . Well, New York was no university town: she could go anywhere with Sam. . . . She could make an artist of herself if she had the chance, and she would pay any price, almost, for that opportunity. What girl wouldn't? . . . If men would only be satisfied with kisses, but—they were such selfish beasts.

For once Alice was eager to be seen in public,

therefore she and Sam went to a night club after the theater. It was a maniacal place, the entertainment was wild, the dancing was feverish: she had never experienced anything like this and it intoxicated her. She was drunk, too, on her escort's praises: over and over again he murmured into her ear that she was the most ravishing, the loveliest creature in the place and she believed him. They danced until they were tired.

Sam did not kiss her on their way back to the hotel although she fully expected him to do so.

Another day of bliss, another night of revelry followed: a third and then a fourth. The young people spent most of their waking hours together: when apart they were constantly in each other's thoughts. They walked alone in a multitude of six million people and no isolation is more complete: nothing breeds a closer sympathy, nothing promotes a completer acquaintance than forced intimacy of this sort. Then came an evening to which Alice had looked forward with dread: Sam took her to see his father.

Thus far she had beheld only the opulent heart of this modern Bagdad, she had seen nothing of the city itself, but Sam piloted her away from the calcium glare of the Rialto and drove south with her through streets that were dark and comparatively deserted, on between endless, towering walls pierced by blind windows. Elevated trains roared through these empty, echoing streets with the clangor of

huge metallic dragons: the denizens were meanly dressed, furtively they passed from shadow to shadow. They came into a wilderness of huge loft buildings and beyond that they entered a maze of streets lined with overcrowded tenements and mean little stores where slatternly women fanned themselves at open windows and shirt-sleeved men sprawled on doorsteps. Filthy-faced, spindle-legged urchins romped between the curbs, dodging the cars that whizzed past by some miraculous instinct of self-preservation and shrieking insults after them. Here was poverty, dirt, garbage, the sights and sounds and smells of a life all too familiar to Alice Hart. The fantastic spell of the last few days fell away from her and she told herself that midnight had struck, that her galloping milk-white steeds were mice once more.

She shuddered, drew closer the silken wrap which Sam had given her and shrank against his side. Here was everything she loathed, back yonder the sky was ablaze; here the air was fetid, there it was heavy with intoxicating scents. She could never return to this. Who cared what Sam Lee was? He offered escape, he held her freedom in his hands and—he trembled like a leaf at her touch. . . . She must act a part, she must be nice to his father for this was the deciding night of her life.

They came into a wholly different and distinctive quarter the sound and the smell of which proclaimed it to be Italian. The small, naked, iron-fenced park

which Sam skirted was overrun with people. There were thousands of children. The square, which should have been lush and green at this time of the year, was almost as bare as the asphalt bounding it and it looked as if the grass had been destroyed by the scuffling feet and the leaves, the very trees themselves, had been poisoned by the hot breath of this restless multitude.

"This is Mulberry Bend Park," Sam said. "It's where I played when I was a child."

"How strange to think of you coming from a place like this," Alice murmured in a stifled voice.

He nodded towards the south. "Down there a little ways is where the governor of the state was born."

A block or two between bleak, narrow walk-ups that ran high and then Sam swung his car into a street more brightly illuminated than the others and with startling suddenness the environment changed once more. New odors, strange and pungent and spicy, came to the girl's nostrils, new pictures greeted her eyes. The signs and the store-fronts carried hieroglyphics, Oriental men crowded the sidewalks: they were yellow, flat-nosed, high cheek-boned, undersized, and they wore ill-fitting, incongruous American clothes. Alice heard outlandish cries and words without meaning. The street ran bank full of pedestrians but the stream divided to let Sam's car pass through.

He was saying something about Chinatown—it was nothing like it was painted—there was no local color—it was a gigantic fake, but Alice heard him indistinctly. These Chinamen recognized Sam Lee's car and they knew Sam Lee: they were gaping at her. And why not? A white girl with one of their own people! A white girl in an evening wrap. Of a sudden she felt frightened, half naked. She had never anticipated anything like this.

Sam stopped his car in front of a building which rose several stories above its neighbors and helped his passenger out. They were facing a fine store, a bazaar, now dimly lighted: alongside of it was a tiled entrance and into this he led her. It was a modern, steel and stone building, there was a noiseless elevator inside an iron grille. Its almond-eyed operator bowed low to his countryman and said something which Sam answered in Chinese. The place was clean and shiny with brass and white marble but there were unrecognizable odors in the air. Opium probably! Alice grew faint, her knees weakened. Where was Sam taking her? What would be the end of this hideous experience? A panic seized her.

She saw it all, now, and understood the significance of his gifts, his attentions. How cunningly he had arranged everything, how patiently he had bided his time. An oily, wily, Oriental maneuver. She was tempted to bolt and run but it was too late,

the elevator gate had closed, she was being rushed upward, out of and away from the world. She wanted to scream but feared to offend her companion. She wondered if she would ever be heard of again.

CHAPTER IV

THE elevator stopped. Alice stepped out into a spacious hall, really an anteroom, elaborately finished in carved teak wood. Through this Sam led her into a room that caused her to gasp. It was splendid, it quite took her breath.

Some spell had been put on her, she reasoned, for a moment ago she had been in the slums and now she stood in a temple of enchantment. This airy, spacious room was a museum of treasures, it was softly lighted, it had an atmosphere of benevolent calm and dignity.

Benevolent calm! Dignity! That's how Sam had once described his father's dwelling place and the words were aptly descriptive also of the owner, a tall old Chinaman who rose and came forward to meet Alice and who was now bowing ceremoniously, raising and lowering his clasped hands in the Chinese manner.

Lee Ying! He was a patriarch and an aristocrat. His voice was pleasant, his speech was slow and precise, his words were well chosen: he carried himself like a noble.

"You honor my poor house," he told his visitor with a benignant smile. "Its contents and the grate-

ful contents of my heart are yours. Sam has often spoken of you in terms of the most respectful admiration and it is generous of you to favor an old man with the light of your countenance."

Alice acknowledged the stately greeting with what composure she could summon for her terror of a moment ago had not entirely dissipated itself. Sam came to her rescue by saying:

"Miss Hart is a stranger to New York and of course she has never seen this part of the city. I'm afraid it frightened her a little bit."

"Oh, no!" The girl laughed in more relief than she cared to show. "I wasn't exactly frightened—just bewildered. It's all so strange and so dumbfounding. I'm an ignorant country girl, you know, and I've never seen anything so huge and so noisy and so appalling as New York. My eyes are popping out. But I'm having a marvelous adventure. Coming here is the most marvelous of all."

"We have no noise up here," smiled Lee Ying. "Nothing but peace, and peace is akin to beatitude. To the mind of a Chinese tranquillity is paradise."

"This *is* paradise!" Alice agreed. "May I—look? And—and exclaim? Oh, it's like a dream!"

Lee Ying bowed again. "You are most graciously flattering. My household gods are smiling with delight."

"Sam never told me —— I had no idea, people lived so sumptuously in this part of the city. Or anywhere else, for that matter. I'm another

Alice in Wonderland. . . . Are those *trees,* out yonder, and *flowers?* Or just a part of the dream?" The speaker gazed round-eyed towards the farther end of the room for it seemed to her that she was looking out into a growing garden, a riot of bloom and foliage. She saw live, luscious, green leaves and heard the tinkle of running water.

Talking as he went, the old man led her out upon the roof of the building itself and along a graveled walk, bordered with shrubbery, to a breast-high coping where she looked down upon the swarming chaos that is Chinatown. Atop this modern, fireproof structure that housed his store, Lee Ying's home stood in a yard of its own. Alice was in a lofty garden hung high above the lights and the clamor of the streets: evergreens and rose bushes were bejeweled with drops from a recent watering, the air was fresh and cool and earthy smelling up here. Yonder, to her left, down a formal pathway of slender cedars, stood a little Chinese pagoda with curling eaves over which a riotous wistaria clambered. Midway of the path was a pool, the abiding place of lazy goldfish with long, lacy fins, and into it a fountain dripped its liquid music: here and there amid the shrubbery were stone and porcelain figures, the play-in-the-garden people Sam called them. They were images of merry little Chinese children, absurdly proportioned animals and queer, capering gnomes with upflūng arms and open mouths. Alice was assured that they never tired of romping and

stopped only when human eyes beheld them. This was a statement easily proved for they were never twice in precisely the same places or postures, Sam assured her.

The lights from the house, and it too had been modeled along pure Chinese lines, flooded the garden with an artificial moonlight wholly entrancing; it was a fairy bower, a place for birds to nest and for lovers to meet.

When the visitor had exhausted her exclamations she was led back indoors and Lee Ying said: "Our poor possessions are commonplace in our eyes but you have the discerning eyes of an artist. If you see anything of beauty, if anything here interests you it would give me pleasure to tell you its history and the story of its making ——"

"Everything interests me."

"—and some of those stories run back into the mists of antiquity."

The girl nodded. "I'm sure they do. I've never seen many nice things, Mr. Lee. But I love everything beautiful and old and rare."

"Very well. We will become more quickly acquainted by exploring each other's tastes and distastes. But you must not permit a garrulous old man to tire you with his hobbies and his enthusiasms. Sam will warn me if I trespass upon your patience and when you weary we will entertain you otherwise. Young people are always hungry and

we have our own peculiar foods and delicacies which may prove pleasing to you."

This Lee Ying was a charming, fatherly old gentleman. Alice had never imagined any Chinaman could possess such learning, such culture, such perfect poise as his; never had she received such gracious courtesy and gratifying deference as was accorded her during the next hour. Her lightest word was listened to, her every wish anticipated, her aged host betrayed a warmth of friendliness that was delightful. His home was an Ali Baba's treasure cave and Alice found herself wondering how rich he was. He must have millions, for she saw rugs and paintings, ivory and jade, jewels and porcelains, fit for a king's collection. The poorest of them was worth what she would deem a fortune. And Lee Ying belonged to some benevolent order of Genii, moreover, for he honestly meant it when he said that all was hers for the asking. She understood only a part of what he told her, for his knowledge of art, of fine china, of silks, of gems and the like far transcended hers and in the course of his talk he wandered into realms that were strange to her. In consequence she was awed. He was like some venerable college professor, only more human and likable. How little she knew as compared with him. No wonder Sam was smart.

"And so you are studying to become a famous artist," Lee Ying smiled cordially upon her and nodded his head. Alice had explored the house, the

extent and the appointments of which astonished her, she had partaken of strange foods, she had drunk tea that was more fragrant than orange blossoms, now she was sitting with father and son.

"I don't hope ever to be famous," she disclaimed, modestly. "To be successful in a small way and to make myself self-supporting is as much as I can expect."

"How do we know? It is fitting that beauty like yours should create more beauty. It is a divine endeavor."

"I don't mean to say I'm not ambitious but ——" Alice shrugged hopelessly.

Sam, who had done little talking thus far explained deferentially that Alice's parents discouraged her further studies.

The elder man looked his distress. "I grieve with you, for it is a noble calling. And yet I cannot urge you to ignore their wishes. If they were willing for you to continue I would esteem it a privilege to be of assistance."

Sam's face lighted, he turned proud, triumphant eyes upon the guest.

Alice flushed and stammered. "Oh, they'd be—delighted. They don't mind anything except the cost. We're dreadfully poor, you know. Father works hard enough but he's so—incompetent, so impractical. And of course I—— Well, it's too marvelous to be true, Mr. Lee, and I don't know how

to thank you. . . . I'm terribly economical, really, and expenses at Eastern are low ——"

Both she and Sam were surprised at Lee Ying's next words. "I understood that your dream envisioned something more ambitious than that."

"You mean—Paris?" faltered the girl, unable to credit the old man's words.

"I do. Why not speed your arrow towards the moon? It will fly the farther." The speaker was addressing Alice but his attention was focused upon Sam. "Time passes, youth is impatient of delay. The road is difficult but the longest journey begins with a step."

"Oh! Mr. *Lee!*" Alice gasped: she clasped her hands over her breast, her eyes widened, her lips parted. "Paris! That's my dream!"

Sam's expression had altered, a look of dismay flickered over his face. What children they were, mused the old man. And how transparent. It had not taken him long to weigh the girl, to read her character and to appraise her worth, now he felt only contempt for her. For Sam he experienced a sincere compassion inasmuch as he knew the boy and had watched him carefully these several days. Sam was blinded, dazzled: motes were in his eyes. Where was his perception? Where was his pride? A tigerish resentment stirred in Lee Ying's breast. His boy, a Son of the Gods, to fall a victim to this vain, self-seeking creature! She was common in fiber, she was crude, and instinct told the elder man

that she was the sort who would readily barter her body and her talents for the gratification of her ambitions. An artist, indeed! Ambition! She had the mind of a miser and the soul of a courtesan. Lee Ying could have strangled her.

Suavely he promised Alice that she could sail for Paris on the next ship if she chose. His attorneys would arrange her transportation and see to her passport, a sum sufficient to meet her requirements would be deposited with his Paris bankers and against it she could draw as and when she chose. Henceforth she was her own mistress, her future was her own. Gracefully he warded off her hysterical effusions of gratitude.

When finally she left, she was almost servile in her thanks, and yet a new confidence, a new determination was in her. Lee Ying suspected that she credited her physical charms, her magnetic beauty with enchanting him. If he had read her aright, and he seldom erred, she would have willingly surrendered those charms to any man, Chinese or white, who offered to do for her what he had done to-night.

When he had finished his final obeisance and the elevator door had closed, he expelled a noisy breath of disgust, he spread his fingers and shook them delicately as if to rid himself of some contaminating touch.

What beastly creatures were these low, conniving

white women. If Sam could only understand. But he had absorbed a Western reverence for the sex. Poor boy, they would cause him nothing but suffering! Here was a situation that could have been handled simply, expeditiously, economically, in any country less "civilized" but more truly cultured than America. Why was it these Occidentals saved their useless women and drowned their kittens? It was a mistaken sentiment.

Alice chattered ceaselessly on the way uptown, failing utterly to notice Sam Lee's silence. Over and over, in a hundred ways she voiced her exultation, blessed Lee Ying as a benevolent saint and his son as her good angel. Such rapture, such animation as hers would have transfigured the plainest girl, it worked a miracle with her.

"My father's wisdom is as great as his benevolence," the young man said finally. "I bow to his judgment in all things. But he can be cruel and implacable. To-night he pierced me with a spear."

"Why, *Sam!* You said you *wanted* him to help me!" Alice observed for the first time the fixed, white look upon her companion's face, and she changed her tone. "It's going to be hard to say good-bye—we've had *such* good times together. You're a darling, Sam, and I'll miss you terribly."

"Alice!" It was the first time he had ever addressed her as anything but "Miss Hart," and she was startled. An odd flatness in his voice chal-

lenged her attention as he went on, "You must realize how much I care for you."

Good Lord! It was coming. He was going to spoil everything, thought the girl.

"You'll be sailing at once. Will you marry me before you go?"

Alice recoiled. She uttered an exclamation and jerked her hand from his sleeve. *Marry* ——! She had never dreamed he'd ask that. The other was bad enough. Marry a—*Chinaman!* The fellow was insane.

The moment that followed was an eternity to both of them.

Sam turned his head, he waited: Alice's thoughts were racing, she glimpsed consequences that appalled her. In a panic she gasped:

"Oh, not that! I *couldn't.* You shouldn't ask me ——" She bit down on her tongue, in spite of herself a shudder of physical repulsion ran over her.

"I'm sorry," Sam said quietly. "I hoped you cared for me."

"I *do!* You've been wonderful —— I'd do anything in the world for you." Alice was thinking dizzily, sickly, what luck for *this* to happen! Tonight of all times. Just when everything was arranged. This would wreck her plans. Oh, it was cruel! But she mustn't let him, she *wouldn't* let him, spoil it all. "Don't let's talk about it now," she said, trying to smile ingratiatingly. Her lips felt stiff and she feared her smile was a painful

grimace. "Not to-night, anyhow? Sometime, perhaps ——"

"Let's settle it now."

The girl swallowed hard, fright seized and shook her. "You're the dearest thing in the world and I owe you everything. I'm—crazy about you, honestly! I guess I've proved that—going out with you at all hours and—and meeting you in your apartment and everything. But I can't give up my career, now can I?"

"That's the farthest thing from my thoughts."

"It isn't fair to—ask me. You know how I feel, how much I like you, without my telling you."

"I'm beginning to understand, for the first time."

"Now, Sam!" The speaker pouted, her tone reproached him. "We've gone along in such perfect understanding. Let's go on being just ——"

"You've indicated in a good many ways that I could go further than I've presumed to go."

"You've no right to say that," Alice cried. "I think you're beastly."

There was a silence through which Sam drove with eyes fixed: upon his face was the intent blankness that hides emotion. Finally he nodded and said:

"I understand. In my person I'm not altogether unpleasing, nor very different from other fellows. As a lover, therefore, I'd be acceptable, if nobody knew. But marriage to a Chinese: that's another matter!"

"Now you're insulting!"

In an explosion of wrath as sudden as it was unexpected he exclaimed: "It's you who insult me! . . . Women are monkeys! Animals fit only for breeding. You've insulted me not once, but a thousand times and I stood for it. Your caution! Your secrecy! . . . 'Nobody must know!' 'What will people say?' The crowning insult was your surprise when I asked you to be my wife, and not my mistress. Let's be honest, for a change. I'll be frank with you, please be the same with me."

"All right!" stormed the girl. "I'll pay any price to go to Paris, if you must know, but I wouldn't *marry* you if you were the last man on earth. Live in Chinatown! Among those people! Oh, my God! I'd cut my throat first. Now what have *you* got to say?"

"Only this: there may be Chinamen who would have you, but I wouldn't."

Alice was shaking, her breast was heaving tumultuously, abruptly she bent forward, covered her face with her hands and began to sob convulsively. "I —suppose this—ends everything," she gasped. "I could—kill myself."

"It ends nothing except a fantastic misconception on my part. Don't concern yourself in the least about your—'career'." Sam pronounced the word bitingly. "My father has promised. I'm a yellow man but not 'yellow' enough to interfere.

For that matter he wouldn't listen to me if I did. I've fallen pretty low but not low enough for that."

"I don't see that—caring for me—— Is that something to be—ashamed of?" Alice wondered if Sam could be sincere. It was incredible, but his next words, contemptuous as they were, somewhat reassured her. "Centuries before your country was discovered we Chinese had discovered the truth about women. But what can be made of a man who will not profit by the wisdom of his elders?"

Another silence came between them which lasted until the car stopped at Alice's hotel. She had done some thinking meanwhile: timidly she said: "Don't let's quarrel. I didn't mean all I said."

"Have no concern," he assured her coldly. "You'll go to Paris."

He lifted his hat and drove away.

The next two days were an eternity for Alice Hart. She suffered tortures. Sam did not communicate with her in any way, neither did Lee Ying, and as the hours crept along she called herself a fool for making an enemy of the son. She had been a bigger fool to believe his protestations of magnanimity. No man could be as generous as that: not after the hurt she had dealt him. Why had she flared up? She could have managed somehow to avoid committing herself—any girl playing for stakes like hers could have managed to temporize. Promises are made to break. But she had no expe-

rience. And the thought of marriage was so shocking. It had come so unexpectedly. Oh, he was furious! The way he had said "you'll go to Paris" should have told her he was beside himself. Funny how a common Chinaman could, with a curl of his lips, and a disdainful look, make her feel like a whining mendicant. And that's practically what she was. . . . Yellow men are vengeful. Sam, of course, had told his father that she scorned him. . . . Fool! Idiot, that she was!

Lee Ying had promised, to be sure, and high-class Chinese are reputed to observe a scrupulous code of honor but —— This uncertainty was maddening. How different her situation now to a few days ago. Life was still going on around her but she had no place in it and she feared to leave her room lest a message should arrive. Nevertheless she couldn't sit here like this forever. Not with a hotel bill running up. She hadn't the remotest idea what the rate was, but it must be appalling. If she didn't hear from Lee Ying, who would pay that bill? How much longer would she be permitted to stay? . . . Yes, and who would pay for these clothes? Here was a thought to bring consternation. She could be arrested ——

That was it! What a simple and satisfying revenge, from Sam's standpoint. Every hour she stayed here she fell deeper into his power. He'd force her to meet his demands, humiliate her, make her eat dirt. The miserable cur! What craft, what

ruthless cruelty. And if she refused —— Arrest! A trial! Disgrace! It would come out that she had been the associate of a Chinaman! People in Bartonville would hear of it.

In a panic she considered calling him up, making friends with him, but she was too frightened to finesse in the slightest. And telephone calls cost ten cents. They'd be put on her bill. Food, too, and "room service," cost money. Thank Heaven she had no appetite. . . . She supposed a real adventuress in her place would order extravagantly, keep the bell boys hopping, cash a worthless check. But that took courage. . . . All the same she was slowly going crazy. Every voice, every sound in the hall made her start, the rattle of a key in a lock caused her to cower. Once her telephone rang and she stifled a scream. She nearly fainted before she reached the instrument, then to hear a casual voice drawl, "Wrong number. Excuse it, please."

The bell rang again, late on the second afternoon. A man—Alice was too agitated to heed his name—was calling. He was from Carter and Pelz, attorneys. Should he come up or would Miss Hart come down? She stammered, "Yes."

Attorneys! Was this the beginning of the end? His voice had been cold, formal, forbidding. The girl's mouth was dry, her knees shook as she blindly left her room.

Faintly she made inquiry at the desk, then started as a man stepped up to her side. He did not lay

a hand on her shoulder, as she half expected, instead he proffered her a fat envelope and explained that it contained her steamship ticket and letter of credit. On the next morning, if agreeable, the speaker would call for her and together they would attend to the formality of securing her passport.

When Alice got back into her room she broke down and cried for an hour.

CHAPTER V

DOCILE and peaceful are the Sons of Han. Sam Lee returned to Eastern University that autumn and resumed his college life where he had left it off. His friends welcomed him and they made a rendezvous of his place. If he was not quite the same to them as formerly, if he was a little less deferent than usual and if there was a cynical flavor to his jests they failed to observe it.

By now his social status had been firmly established and not even those closest to him made any effort to better it. Why should they when they accepted it as definitely and satisfactorily settled. It is doubtful if the thought of doing so ever occurred to them. To Sam, however, it was an ever-present dissatisfaction, an incurable canker, the which his experience with Alice Hart had merely made more painful. He could not resign himself to his situation. There were times when he rebelled against all things Oriental and gagged at the Chinese flavor: times when a voice in him fairly shrieked that he was a white man in disguise. Like a soldier outside the lines he shouted "Friend! Friend!" and spoke the password, but nobody heard him. That inner voice clamored so loudly and so insistently that he was amazed when others failed to hear it.

He was constantly at war with himself, queer cross-currents kept him in turmoil, opposing forces, too obscure to analyze, tugged at him, dragged him first one way then another, and neither would let go. He was a trial and a disappointment to himself.

There was ample cause for him to wonder what ailed him and to speculate as to the reason for his resentments against both the white and the yellow race; it was not at all strange that he felt as if two civilizations, setting in opposite directions, met and clashed in him, for that is about what was happening. And yet he was no Eurasian; it was not a mixture of sour, antagonistic bloods in his veins that kept him in ferment as so often happens in the case of half-breeds. He was no mongrel, he was—an experiment. In him raged the conflict not of two human races but of two human forces, heredity and environment.

Inasmuch as this story has to do with the working of those antagonistic influences it will be necessary to go back more than twenty years to a night in San Francisco and to a street in Chinatown: back to Pan Yi, a Chinese woman whose little feet were like two "golden lilies," and to Officer Dunne whose feet were unlike anything in the botanical kingdom. We shall have to translate the meaning of the red paper prayers which Pan Yi pasted on the stone lions of the public library, and make the acquaintance of a sentimental patrolman whose heart was bigger than his feet.

There had been feasting in the house of Lee Ying and now there was music, the sound of which caused a crowd to gather outside of his store. The onlookers were greatly interested in what was going on: there was a continuous clacking of tongues, eyes were glued upon the blazing upstairs windows through which issued the clashing of cymbals, the twanging of guitars, the harsh notes of flageolets and the shrilling of flutes. These harmonious sounds, together with the coming and going of prominent people, all dressed in sumptuous attire, constituted quite an entertainment for the loiterers.

Lee Ying, proprietor of the Palace of Imperial Bounty, largest and most prosperous of the great San Francisco bazaars, was a rich man, and he lived in the luxury befitting a noble. His rooms were spacious, they were paneled in carved wood overlaid with gold or hung with ornamental silk of delicate colorings: rugs of Tientsin covered the floors and from his ceilings swung crystal chandeliers that glittered with the blinding brilliance of a midday sun. In the street below it was rumored that to-night's feast had included not only all that the local markets afforded but also such rare, incomparable and high-priced importations from the homeland as birds'-nest broth, shark's fins, duck steamed in the vapor of *fan* spirits, larded quails, sucking pigs, fish gills, preserved eggs, sweet lotus soup, rice and pear wine. The number and the

character of these delicacies varied according to the taste or the imagination of the speaker.

But it was known to all that Lee Ying was a generous man and this being a notable occasion in his life it was considered likely that he would distribute gifts among those who were too lowly actually to sit at his table but who, nevertheless, did him the courtesy to smack their hungry lips outside his door and to wish him a hundred birthdays and to forecast a thousand distinguished honors for his infant son. In this hope the crowd waited.

Their patience was rewarded in due time. Even Officer Dunne, a seasoned member of the local police squad, shared in the importer's generosity for Lee Ying sent a servant out on the streets in search of him, then left his important guests long enough to present the patrolman with a bundle of banknotes and to offer him, with a ceremony that engaged both hands, a bowl of hot rice wine.

The policeman was loath to take the money, but he accepted the wine readily enough. "Here's health to your son," he said, lifting the cup high. "As fine a baby as ever I saw. May he never know bad health, bad luck or bad company and grow up to be even half the man his father is."

The Chinaman bowed and beamed. In his precise, deliberate English he thanked the speaker for these good wishes.

"My wife and I are thankful that Heaven sent him to us and we rejoice that the auguries are favor-

able for his future. The signs and portents point to great riches and much luck."

"You're certainly giving him a grand start. Why, this is like Chiny New Year, all but the firecrackers. Well, every christening ought to be a high-jinks, to my way of thinking."

"Yes. He is our first born, our last, our only son. Our joy is overwhelming."

"Sure, it is." Dunne nodded. "You people put a lot more importance in children than we do. With us Irish they're a kind of a plague. And his luck is starting early: knowing you and Mrs. Lee like I do it strikes me he's the fortunate one, not you."

"We regard it differently. In our eyes it is a matter of first importance that a man should have a son to offer sacrifice at the Ancestral Hall and to worship at his tomb."

"I know."

"The supplication of a Chinese is not, 'Give me children or I die,' but 'Give me a son or I cannot die in peace.' We have a saying that it is hard to be poor without murmuring but it is harder to be rich without arrogance. I have met the test of both but neither is so hard as to grow old without an heir."

"You're the best citizen in the quarter, Mr. Lee, and the most like a white man of any Chinee I ever knew, but at heart you're just what you've always been. You people don't change much, do you?"

"It is one of the qualities responsible for our

greatness," Lee Ying smiled. He could not long keep his mind from what was going on in his home, and he went back to it again, beaming genially: "Yes, this is truly a great occasion. What you would call a miracle has happened. My wife, Pan Yi, as you know, is a 'praying woman' ——"

"I didn't know. But religion never hurt anybody," asserted Dunne, who was warmed by the rice wine.

"I should have said she is a barren woman. It is the custom of our barren women to pray ceaselessly in the hope of obtaining offspring. They burn incense in the joss houses and make offerings to the lions in front of our temples—and yours, too. Lions are sacred animals, you know. Poor little Pan Yi has walked far on her lily feet bearing wine and pork and chicken and rice to the many lions guarding your so-great and so-numerous public buildings. Miles and ——"

"So, *that's* what they're up to with their punk sticks and joss paper? I never knew."

"She is a devout woman but Heaven was slow in responding to her prayers, and mine. Meanwhile, age crept upon us, we grew brittle and dry. We began to despair. I dare say it was only a test of our faith, or perhaps our offerings were unsuitable."

"Little did I think he'd fall into a soft home like this or that you'd take to him right off the bat. Not many would."

"Pan Yi held the little man in her hungry arms

and his mouth sought her breast. His tendril fingers curled around my unworthy thumb. In our hearts we recognized him as our son."

Dunne shot a quick glance at the speaker. "Well, that's a—that's one way to put it."

"As truly our son as if Pan Yi had suffered the pangs of childbirth." This was said with deliberate emphasis.

"Sa-ay!" The policeman stared incredulously. "I thought you were kidding. Ain't you going to *adopt* him? Why, I'm liable to get in trouble ——"

"We shall not adopt him, for he is ours. It would be an affront to the beneficent powers who laid him in our arms."

"But, man dear! Anybody can tell he's not a Chinee kid. . . . I figgered it was a great break for him to be adopted by a rich man like you: a lot better than a foundlings' home. Those kids never amount to anything. But—I'm supposed to report such things."

"You look at it through Western eyes, we through eyes of deeper understanding. He is a godling, a boy from the azure sky, but his flesh has been made our flesh, his blood our blood."

"Hm—m! I know what it means when you people get an idea in your heads. There's no getting it out."

"Rest assured he will fare better than a son by adoption."

"He may be a Chinee, at that," Dunne admitted,

after consideration. "Babies look pretty much alike. But suppose he ain't? Suppose he grows up to look white?"

"It is of more importance to consider how he will think, how he will act, how he will live. In view of his celestial origin is it reasonable to expect him to look like other boys? No. He shall be reared like the superior being he is."

"That's all right, too," Dunne said, still unconvinced and with misgivings in his mind, "but you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"Heredity! A myth of the Occident." Lee Ying dismissed the subject with a wave of his loose silken sleeve. "We Chinese are old in wisdom. The perfection of a vase lies not in the potter's clay but in the craft of the artist who fashions it and in the skill of the glazier. A son from the clouds has come to me, my life shall be devoted to rearing him in the likeness of a prince. I have meditated: I have no fear."

No doubt there were some residents of San Francisco's Chinatown who considered it strange that a son had come to a couple so old as Lee Ying and his wife and who therefore exchanged gossip on the subject, but, if so, they were too polite or too politic to permit their words to reach the importer's ears. He was jealous of his honor, as befits any right-living man, and it was known that he could be vindictive towards those who offended him. After all,

it was a matter that concerned him alone and the average Chinese is not meddlesome at heart. Moreover he has faith in his gods or, in any event, he believes in their ability to manifest their powers when moved to do so. If the supplications of Pan Yi had indeed been heeded it was merely a proof of the potency of prayer, and similar phenomena were of daily occurrence.

For that matter sons are not seemly subjects for joking among Lee Ying's people: lacking a boy of his own he would have been expected to adopt one out of regard for his family line. Ancestral worship and respect for the family as a social integer has induced the Chinese to carry adoption to extremes, or to what any other people would consider extremes. Sons are adopted to act for their new parents as commercial agents. Children of poor parents are purchased for adoption and, upon occasion, kidnapers make a profit from the sale of stolen children.

In spite of his Western culture and liberality of thought, Lee Ying was thoroughly Chinese in his religious observances—the color of a man's soul cannot be washed out in a few years, nor can the faith of two hundred generations change in the course of one—and he would have been expected to go to any length in finding a son to worship at his tablet. No, the belated coming of his boy was taken as evidence of his luck, as proof that the as-

trological influences ruling at the hour of the merchant's birth were fortunate.

So it was that his friends and well-wishers entered heartily into the celebration, before described, when the baby received its "milk name," Lee Sam, and its head was shaved. They expressed themselves as hopeful of joining in the ceremonies attendant upon the commencement of the boy's studies, when he would receive his "book name," and still later, at the time of his marriage, when he would be presented with his "great name." Soon it was forgotten that his arrival had been attended by circumstances in any wise unusual.

Little Sam was a pretty and a beguiling infant, he was plump and dimpled, his limbs were straight, his eyes were black and shiny, he laughed more often than he cried. Due no doubt to a good stomach he wrapped himself in a mantle of contentment, the blissful smile of a Buddha hovered upon his lips. In this placid demeanor his parents affected to behold infallible indications of a rich and a benevolent mind. He was a sturdy manling and he turned out to be wholly immune to the ordinary infantile ailments, corroborative evidence of his celestial origin. He developed rapidly, too. Who ever heard of an ordinary mortal with a tooth at three months of age? But Sam had two, as white as rice kernels.

Demigods teethe early. They suffer no mortal ills. Nevertheless there was no sense in taking

chances: Pan Yi, out of an excess of caution, painted the little rubber button that served Sam as a nose with the red paint of happiness, she daubed his forehead with vermilion luck signs and put girls' earrings in his ears to fool the jealous gods into thinking him one of the despised sex. To further aid the deception she called him by girls' names.

When he seemed to feel less well than usual she was not content to hire one doctor or even two: she hired several and she made the little fellow swallow the medicines of white specialists and Chinese practitioners at one and the same time. The fact that he survived those American prescriptions in addition to powdered cobwebs, ground leather, dried bat wings and the like would have convinced even a skeptic that he was indeed no common boy.

Lee Ying became daily more attached to his son and as for heart-hungry Pan Yi, the years fell away from her and she bloomed into a girl again. She made frequent thank offerings to the various deities, slighting not even the least important, and she gave expensive presents to her friends, assuming a new importance not only in their eyes but also in the eyes of her own servants by reason of her motherhood. Every contented gurgle from the wet lips of little Sam brought a song to hers, his peevish yells filled her with dread and threw the entire establishment into confusion. They even disturbed the orderly course of business in the Palace of Imperial Bounty itself, for Lee Ying's clerks and helpers worshiped

the newcomer as they would have worshiped the lord of ten thousand chariots.

All of the above is merely a roundabout way of saying that the foundling had fallen into a good home and that the merchant and his wife were ordinary old people who indulged themselves in the priceless luxury of thoroughly spoiling their one and only son.

How good that home was became more apparent as time went on. Only the finest foods were given to the child and they were prepared with the highest skill: his garments were of rich materials and they were embroidered with royal insignia, his toys were numerous and expensive, upon his tiny cap was sewn the ruby button of a Mandarin of the first rank.

His father saw to these material comforts, his mother exercised her utmost cunning to safeguard his health and his well-being. Warily she circumvented the malicious influences that threaten little boys. Knowing the penumbral regions to be peopled with the shades of unmated women who are forever trying to reinstate themselves by snatching the souls of new-born men-children and making them their own, she burned old shoe-leather near Sam's cradle to drive them away. She ignited incense to the Gods of Colds and Coughs and Colics: every night she carefully turned his shoes upside down so that the demon of pestilence could not scatter sickness in them.

Certain of Lee Ying's friends and neighbors ventured to suggest that in raising Sam like a noble he was perhaps making too much of his boy, but the importer answered them with a smile, saying:

"He who puts no faith in his son shall find no faith in him. If I raise him as a prince, a prince he is likely to be, for when the mirror is highly polished how can dust defile it?"

When the time came for Sam to commence his studies he was not sent to school, a Chinese tutor was engaged for him and his education was begun in the time-honored, orthodox manner, which is to say that a book was put into his chubby hands—an imposing work the introductory statement in which read, "Men at their birth are by nature radically good." This entire volume Sam was forced to memorize.

Hour after hour, day after day, week after week, he repeated, parrot-like, the sentences of his tutor until he could lisp them without an error. Page upon page of characters he listlessly traced in total ignorance of their meaning, book after book he learned by rote. He was taught the names of the thousands of arbitrary Chinese word signs, a four years' labor in itself, and in time their significance was made known to him. Not until then did his studies begin to hold interest.

According to Chinese belief scholarly rank does not involve practical knowledge but is acquired through mastery of the classics, by the study of

geography, arithmetic, science, the etiquette of social behavior and the like. Young Sam memorized Chinese history, he learned stories of youthful precocity, tending to show the value of education. He was given examples of poor scholars who acquired knowledge under difficulties, like the boy who, lacking money for a lamp, bored a hole in the wall and studied by the light from a neighbor's lantern. He was drilled in reciting the twenty-four stories of filial piety, such as the tale of the son who thawed through the ice on a pond by lying naked on it so as to catch carp for his mother, and of the little boy who went early to bed so that the mosquitoes could have their fill of him before his parents retired.

He was taught the story of creation: how the male and the female principles, "yang" and "yin," gave birth to Pan-Ku, the hewer-out of the universe and how he grew steadily, six feet every day, for eighteen thousand years.

Lee Sam learned all of his lessons out loud, and the harder he tried to memorize them, the louder he shouted. He would bend his body and bow his shaven head in an earnest effort at concentration and yell at the top of his voice:

"Pan-Ku labored at his task for eighteen thousand years and when he died his head became the mountains, his breath the wind, his voice the thunder, his blood the rivers and his flesh the soil. His teeth, his bones and his marrow became the metals, the rocks and the precious stones: his sweat the rain.

The insects creeping over his body are human beings. . . . In his hands he held up the sun and the moon and fixed them in the sky. . . . Of the universe he made fifty-one stories. Thirty-three are heavens and eighteen are hells. The body of Pan-Ku is dead but his soul will live forever."

Lee Ying would smile and the wrinkles about his eyes would deepen as he listened to his son's noisy recital of the stirring deeds of Pan-Ku.

"The object of study is to unfold the aim," he would say. "How learned would that man be who could master all of the doctrines of all of the people of the world."

Sam had his occasional holidays, of course: on the birthdays of the gods or during religious festivals his father took him by the hand and led him out upon the streets where he could stare owl-eyed at all the entrancing sights. New Year was the most glorious time of all for then, among other things, Sam went with Lee Ying to pay his New Year's calls and to receive his presents from their friends. Bravely he trudged at his father's side: he bowed and scraped and raised and lowered his clasped hands in careful imitation of his elders.

The entire festival was one long succession of interesting experiences and intoxicating joys. There was feasting, the burning of prayers, the popping of firecrackers to frighten evil spirits from the streets, the vaporizing of vinegar to exorcise them from the house. Every New Year's eve the kitchen god

came back from Heaven where he had journeyed to report on the family and Pan Yi, who was ceaselessly engaged in occult observances calculated to win favors from "on high," was not above rubbing the lips of the kitchen god's image with honey to make certain that nothing except sweet words would issue therefrom.

Jealous of the joy Lee Sam had brought she never permitted the house to be swept during the first few days of the festival lest a mite of happiness would be brushed out by the brooms. As for the boy, he learned to take all these practices as a matter of course, like the parades of dragons, the lanterns, the troops of strolling players, the puppet shows with their favorite New Year's spectacle of the monkey which was worshiped as a god. They were part and parcel of his life.

He had no contact whatever with things American, his mind was trained in the Oriental school. He was thoroughly Chinese.

CHAPTER VI

PAN YI ascended the dragon when Sam was eleven years old and he mourned for her as sincerely as did his honorable father. The next year Lee Ying moved to New York. This change was prompted partly by grief and partly in order that the importer might the better attend to his eastern store which was steadily growing in importance. So, at least, Lee Ying declared. In reality there was another reason for his going. Sam was growing to look more and more like a Son of the Gods, that is to say, he was growing to look less and less like a Chinese boy. To the father this was confirmation of his belief in the lad's celestial origin, not that confirmation of an implicit faith was necessary but he heard whisperings that disturbed him and one day Officer Dunne came to him in considerable distress of mind. The women engaged in Chinatown settlement work—the white women—were asking questions. They were meddlesome creatures and to them the dignity, the repose of Lee Ying's declining years meant nothing.

The importer pondered. In his eyes Sam was all that a high-class Chinese boy should be and he carried himself like the son of an Iron Capped Prince. He spoke no more than a few words of English,

he did not know how to think, how to act, how to play like a white child, but unfortunately these missionary zealots were familiar only with coolie types; they had never seen a Chinese gentleman, aside perhaps from Lee Ying himself and a very few of his well-born friends. Little Sam was undeniably conspicuous and to them he resembled a white boy. New York was unlike San Francisco, the father reflected: there it would be possible, with less danger of interference and annoyance, to raise his precious godling, as he had vowed to raise him, into a man who would be a credit to his name and whose virtues would reflect honor upon his ancestors. Accordingly the move was made.

It required several express cars to transport the household belongings of the merchant prince and when father and son set out upon their journey across the continent they traveled in state.

Arrived in New York, Lee Ying set himself up in even better style than formerly and the local Chinese welcomed him as if he were a person of national importance. To the Lees it was much like coming from the real China into a land of barbarians, for New York's Chinatown was but a pale counterfeit of the Chinese quarter in San Francisco. Nevertheless they adapted themselves to it, the curtains of the past fell together behind them, a new life began.

For Sam Lee it was a full and an interesting life. For one thing he was allowed more liberty

than he had ever known, for another the new servants showed him a greater deference even than the old ones and he learned to rule them autocratically. Outside of the house he received unusual consideration, too. His father was the richest Oriental in the city and his accomplishments were respected, he was honored as a sage and a philosopher, his sayings were listened to and cherished as gems of wisdom; to the son and heir of such a man, therefore, the utmost courtesy was due. Sam's seniors bowed gravely to him on the street, a certain subtlety of meaning was attributed to his juvenile chatter. The Chinese children looked on him as a remote, a superior being who invoked awe.

Lee Ying procured an English tutor for Sam, a bespectacled Cantonese with a bulging, pear-shaped head. The fellow had graduated from Yale, and in his hands Sam's education took a new turn. In a year he had learned to speak a stilted, pedantic sort of book-English and there were few tricks of pronunciation that bothered him. He had learned also to wear American clothes which he did whenever he and his myopic tutor went out into the streets. At fourteen he had grown into a sallow, spindling, owlish youth crammed to the point of indigestion with a learning far beyond his years.

One day Sam and his tutor were sitting in Mulberry Bend Park, that breathing place tucked in between Chinatown and its environs on the east and the crowded Italian neighborhood to the west of it.

It was a favorite resting place of theirs, for here the tutor could read while Sam watched the white children at play. Their amusements were rough and meaningless to the boy, the yelling and the quarreling that went with every game struck him as senseless and undignified, nevertheless he felt a timid eagerness to take a hand. It was less a desire actually to have a part in the sports, whatever their significance, than a feeling of loneliness and a dull resentment at being left out. The truth is he had begun to yearn for human companionship. The children of Mott and Pell and Doyers Streets could not bring themselves to share their games with him, for they were commoners and he was a prince, and the white urchins of the neighborhoods nearby ignored him. When they did notice him they manifested a marked rudeness doubly distressing to the sensitive mind of a Chinese child: they either fell silent in his presence and stared curiously at him or they giggled and whispered.

Sometimes they openly jeered at him; "Chinamen eat rats!" or "Hey, John! Let's see your pig tail."

They were unmannerly, quarrelsome persons, they were boisterous barbarians: Sam disapproved of their vulgarities and he disdained their insults. He was aware of his own superiority, nevertheless they had the power to hurt him: he felt ashamed and—naked in their presence. It was useless to ignore the fact that their jibes smarted and there

was mighty little comfort either to be had from repeating such philosophical truths as "The excellence of a man consists not in his courage but in his virtue." . . . "He who strikes me with a sharp point will not himself be safe for long." Nor did it bring any great serenity of soul to meditate upon the five qualities of moral virtue. Sam had a tempestuous and wholly un-Chinese desire to fall upon these grimy demons and hurt them as they hurt him.

This day he noticed on the bench next to his a little girl, somewhat younger than himself. She was bundled up in more clothes than the weather called for and from her color it was plain that she had been ill. She possessed an impudent nose and a pair of imperious blue eyes the which were contradicted by a wistful mouth. She was as frail and as pretty as one of those pallid lilies or carved ivory fans the old Chinese poets wrote about and when her glance met Sam's she shyly averted it. This happened two or three times, then the little girl smiled. Sam's lips parted. A moment later he was standing at her side.

"Are you sick, too?" she inquired. Sam shook his head. "I been sick. I most died."

"I am sorry," he managed to say.

"Wasn't you ever sick?"

"No. I have been remarkably free from disease."

"Well, why don't you play with the other kids? . . . You're Chinese, ain't you? Gee, you don't

talk like a Chinaman. . . . I bet it's hard to talk Chinese. . . . We had three doctors at our house and my ma's hair turned gray in a single night. . . . Why don't you play? I'd play if I could, but I can't. Don't you like to play? I do. Only I hate it now."

"My father prefers to have me improve my mind. He says those who would win honor in their studies must learn mental discipline."

"My father never went to school. He's an Assemblyman and he goes to Albany and makes laws. Say, everybody jumps through when he tells 'em to! . . . Gee, it must be funny to be a Chinaman! I'd rather be sick. . . . I had chills and fever and headache and sick stummick. I had everything." Plainly the speaker was in a boastful mood.

"Doubtless the hot and cold elements of your body were not in harmonious accord," Sam told her politely, "or an evil spirit moved your brain bones about in a painful manner."

"Yeah! I could feel 'em move. . . . Say! I bet I know why you don't play. The kids won't let you. But I don't care if you're a Chink: you can play with me—till I get well."

This young person's frankness and impetuosity were embarrassing but she was a friendly soul and her interest in Sam was unaffected. Her rudeness was unintentional and merely the result of an eager curiosity. She was easy to get acquainted with for she not only told everything there was to tell about

herself but also answered many of her own questions before Sam could do so and thus cleared the way for more. She was a chatterbox. Her name was Eileen Cassidy and that was her brother, Jim, yonder. Jim fetched her here every day. They lived down on Oliver Street.

"My pa took me in your store one day. Gee! It's big. You live upstairs, don't you? I live in a regular house. . . . I like stores that smell good, like yours. Can you buy anything you want in there? . . . Pa says you're awful rich. . . . Is that man your teacher? I bet it's fun to have your own teacher. . . . Public school's awful, there's so many foreigners. Ma says it's awful. . . . My brother Jim's getting tough, running around with Wops and everything. We're Irish. . . . Why don't you ask me something? . . . My pa used to be a policeman!"

A policeman! Here was information of a startling character. Miss Cassidy had an immature mind but she was, manifestly, a person of importance and Sam was curious about policemen. He launched himself into speech: soon he and Eileen were talking like old friends. Eileen hitched herself closer to him and plied him eagerly with questions, her thirsty mind drank up whatever he had to say and for the first time in his life Sam tasted the heady wine of flattery. This child considered him a person of rare attainments: the most commonplace occur-

rences were extraordinary in her eyes. Magically he expanded.

When he and his tutor walked home Sam was outwardly sedate, but inwardly he was in upheaval. His notions of white children had entirely altered, there was a strange warm feeling in his breast. He had a friend.

In suppressed excitement he told Lee Ying all about the surprising adventure that had befallen him and the old man listened with a smile, saying finally: "Yes, her father is well known to me. He is a man of influence in the district."

"She was saved from death by a miracle," Sam declared, "and in the space of a single night the hair of her august mother turned white. There were three doctors, of whom the medicine was bitter. Probably it was made of powdered cockroaches. She is not ugly, like other white children, her eyes are blue and there is sunshine in them. It is strange that the God of Colic would place a spell upon an insignificant girl-child. Would it be polite to make her a present and show my respectful pleasure in her acquaintance?"

"Polite, indeed. Only by a benevolent consideration of others may we attain to exalted virtue. What sort of present would suitably express your delicate concern?"

Sam considered. "She complains of a savage, gnawing hunger. Perhaps a box of sweet cakes and candies ——"

"In which you could share? No. A book would be suitable as coming from a student but the minds of girl-children are light. I think one of our Chinese dolls would please her better. Or a small tree of coral and amethyst and jade, with quivering petals of crystal."

"To a person of her childish tastes a doll would indeed be more suitable," Sam agreed. "Her mind is undeniably frivolous."

Eileen's brother Jim was a healthy, harum-scarum boy and he resented playing the effeminate rôle of nurse-maid, so in the days that followed he more than willingly surrendered the care of his sister to Sam Lee and proceeded to amuse himself. Daily Sam brought presents to his little friend and in consequence his status with the other children changed. They began to regard him with something besides contempt. Seeing in him a source of possible revenue they assumed a demeanor wholly artificial—it was an experience, by the way, with which he was destined to become all too familiar as time went on. It pleased Sam, he bought both immunity from insult and a kind of popularity but in so doing he made serious inroads upon the stock of the Palace of Imperial Bounty.

Eileen Cassidy proved one day that she, at least, was a stout and loyal friend. On this occasion Sam had brought her not ivory, nor agate, nor silk as usual, but his own most cherished possession, his fighting crickets. There were three of them, each

housed in a gourd elaborately carved and colored to resemble a blooming flower and provided with a perforated ivory cover highly decorated.

These crickets, he explained, were not ordinary insects, they were the reincarnation of famous warriors long dead and they bore honorable Chinese names, the which Eileen did not undertake to repeat. As such they received the most delicate attentions; they were fed and watered from tiny porcelain dishes and a little bed was provided for each. They were specially bred and trained champions with records of many victories, Eileen was told, and their food consisted of rice, lettuce, beans and chopped fish. To rouse their fierceness before a battle mosquitoes gorged with human blood were fed to them. The eagerness with which this gift was received may be imagined. Live dolls! In delightful doll houses, equipped with the tiniest of doll furniture. Was anything so wonderful?

The other children were more excited by the bloodthirsty nature of the diminutive warriors than by Sam's recital of their virtues, and a crowd gathered. There was a pushing and shoving and finally a scream from Eileen, as an unmannerly boy despoiled her of her treasure. Sam promptly fell upon the robber. In an instant they, and not the crickets, were at each other's throats.

It was Sam's first fight and he was astonished to discover that he took to it readily. But alas, other boys piled upon him. The cricket gourds

were trampled underfoot, crushed, their warlike occupants met with fates more shocking than they had ever wrought upon their vanquished adversaries. Eileen was in hysterics, Sam was mastered by a terrible indignation: rage boiled up in him so fiercely that he was unconscious of pain. He was pushed and pulled, kicked and struck: he was flung down and his clothes were torn. His nose was bleeding, he heard yells of,

"Soak the Chinaman!" . . . "Wallop the doity Chink!" . . . "Lemme get at 'im."

Eileen was in the very middle of the fray—she had by now fully recovered her strength—biting, scratching, kicking, striking.

"I'll kill you," she screamed. "You hurt him and I'll scratch your eyes out. . . . Let him go. . . . You greasy Wops! I'll tell my pa."

Dan Cassidy was known and feared but gang-spirit was proof against more than the mere threat of his anger. On a ribbon around her neck Eileen wore her father's old police whistle and this at last she blew with all her breath. Now in the neighborhood of The Five Points, police whistles are not sounded in idleness. Having pretty well disposed of Sam, his assailants were becoming frightened at the extent of the havoc they had created, so they separated and scurried away, each in his own direction. They left Eileen stamping her feet, shaking her fists and shrieking threats of vengeance after them.

Sam was a sight. He was skinned and bruised and bloody, his nose pained him terribly. It did not feel like a nose at all: it was much larger than a nose and it bled. There was the taste of blood in his mouth. No doubt he would bleed to death in a very short time. That appalling prospect concerned him less, however, than the amazing phenomena which had occurred inside of him. He had been reared in the dignity and the repose that is Chinese, he had been taught to abhor violence, he had been made to believe that peace is perfection and tranquillity is paradise. What strange and terrifying monster was this that had taken possession of him, soul and body? It rocked and swayed him, it lashed his mind to madness. His hurts were pleasant and he took a savage, drunken joy in them. The taste of blood was sweet. He did not want these hoodlums to run away, he wanted them to stay and rend him into a thousand pieces if meanwhile he could sink his teeth into them, if he could scratch and gouge and tear their flesh. He'd kill them. One against ten. He'd wait, he'd never forget. A dirty Chink! And his mighty warriors, those honorable heroes of a hundred battles, corpses now! Crushed under the heels of barbarians! He stooped and tried to collect the shattered bits of gourd shell, and ivory and porcelain. He wept for the three brave spirits that were gone.

Eileen was crying, too; she was plucking at him and talking shrilly. She was crying not for the

crickets but for him. She was his friend: his one and only friend. She was drawing him away from the battlefield, leading him to her home.

"Mercy me! What have you been up to now and who's this with you?" Mrs. Cassidy inquired a few minutes later when her daughter came wailing into the house, hauling Sam by the hand much as a noisy, whistling tug-boat warps a liner into its berth.

"So? It's that nice Chinee boy you've been playing with. Shame on the both of you to be fighting! Wait now and stop your crying. Who's going to tell me what happened?"

Eileen told what happened, of course. There was no stopping her. Choking, sobbing, she gasped out the horrid story and meanwhile Sam tried to compose himself. It was no easy task for his face was swelling and that gale of fury which had swept him had not as yet blown itself out: he was still in a turmoil.

But this was a house of understanding and of sympathy. Mrs. Cassidy neither condemned him nor made light of the tragedy; on the contrary she praised his spirit and voiced indignation at the outrage: she made a lot over Sam, in a motherly way. To begin with, she took him into the bathroom and washed his face and hands and put strange smelling salves and liniments upon his cuts and bruises, then she brushed his clothes and pinned up the rents in them. Not once did she call him a Chink nor indi-

cate in any way that he was in the least different from other boys.

"Don't you mind a little beating," she told him. "I bet you could lick any one of those rowdies in a fair fight. They're the worst boys in the neighborhood and they'll come to no good. From what Eileen tells me you're a little gentleman —— There! It's quit bleeding already. . . . I hope she's had the grace to thank you for all the nice playthings you gave her when she was sick."

"You are too kind," Sam said in a quavering voice. "I have never before engaged in a fight. The lowest order of men are vicious, the higher type of man is firm but not quarrelsome."

"D'you hear that, Eileen? There's sense to the boy. And the nice English he uses! Yes, and you picking up nothing but slang and vulgarity off the streets. So your brother Jimmy lets a stranger do the fighting for the family? Wait till Dan Cassidy hears that. Now then tell me about these crickets that started the trouble. I never heard of the like."

Eileen went into tears again, it was Sam who explained about the three doughty heroes and their untimely end. Mrs. Cassidy listened with interest, she betrayed a suitable grief and expressed befitting regrets; then she hustled the children down into the kitchen and gave each of them a glass of cold milk and a cooky. While they ate and drank, she had to hear about the crickets over and over again.

When Sam finally left, Mrs. Cassidy walked to

the door with her arm around his shoulders and before she let him go she smoothed his hair and gave him a motherly pat on the cheek. She invited him to come again.

There was a lump in the boy's throat as he walked home. Mrs. Cassidy had the same tender touch as little old Pan Yi, of blessed memory, and there was the same comfort in her robust voice as in the bird-like cooing of Sam's Chinese mother. He wondered why he had felt like crying every time this white woman's firm and capable hands touched his flesh. Why had he yearned so desperately to feel her sheltering arms around his body? Other Chinese children shrank from contact with people of white skins, but he liked it. He had the queer feeling that Mrs. Cassidy and Eileen were flesh and blood with him.

On the next Sunday afternoon Lee Ying and Lee Sam, each clad in his finest native dress, called at the Cassidy home. The entire family was there and the old merchant bowed deeply in turn to the Assemblyman, to his wife, to Jim and to little Eileen: he raised his clasped hands to the level of his forehead and lowered them repeatedly. Sam did likewise. Then Lee Ying made a graceful speech of thanks for the courtesy his son had received.

"Don't mention it," Cassidy begged of him. "Didn't your boy do the fighting my son Jim should have done? It's me that should be thanking you. Sit down, Mr. Lee. I'm proud to welcome you

here." He turned to Sam and said kindly: "Come here, my lad, and let's have a look at a battling China boy. I've heard how smart you are and you look it. Eileen likes you better than any kid in the neighborhood." He rested a large hand upon Sam's shoulder.

The boy was moved but he restrained his emotions. Gravely he said:

"I am honored by her friendship. A man should choose a friend who is better than himself, otherwise he had better have none."

Dan Cassidy smiled in delight. "Will you listen to that, mother? He's got the sense of a grown-up."

"Do not be spoiled by compliments," Lee Ying cautioned his son. "Remember that he who tells you of your faults is a teacher: he who praises your virtues does you harm." To Mrs. Cassidy he said: "Sam brings you an unworthy remembrance of his gratitude for your kindness and I beg that you will accept it." As he spoke he unwrapped a package the boy had carried exposing a beautiful porcelain vase of delicate and unusual coloring.

Mrs. Cassidy admired it, she thought it would look well on the plush-draped mantel between the marble clock and the gilt easel with the photograph of Dan Cassidy in his silk hat and frock coat of office. The good woman was unaware that she held in her careless hand a relic of a famous dynasty which would have drawn a crowd in any museum, but she was frank to say it was pretty.

To Jim and Eileen she voiced a warning: "Mind you don't knock it off and break it, now. That's the worst of children, Mr. Lee, you can't keep a decent thing in the house." Lee Ying winced. The vase would have provided for the education of both Cassidy children: it was only by an effort that he smiled when the mother said doubtfully: "And I don't know as I'd dare put flowers, real flowers, in it, either. Why, it's as thin as an eggshell."

"It is so called," he murmured.

"One of these days, when Dan can afford it, I'm going to buy a whole set of nice thin dishes in your store."

"I shall look forward to serving you with my own hands. We Chinese are the fathers of fine porcelains and potteries. Ceramics was an art with us when other nations were learning to make crude clay jugs and jars."

"Well, I declare! I suppose that's why you keep the prices down. I tell Dan I can always get the worth of my money in Chinatown, which is more than I can do on Broadway or the Bowery."

"I hope you didn't punish the lad for fighting," Mr. Cassidy broke in.

"On the contrary, I commended him, although we Chinese believe so firmly in the right as to scorn the thought that it must be enforced by might."

"So! You're a philosopher."

"To have common sense is to be a philosopher.

We're an ancient people and we mold our lives and our teachings to the patterns set by our ancestors."

"Yes, and it's not a bad idea. You know a lot more than we give you credit for."

Lee Ying smiled. "We are proud of our age and our wisdom. China produced her greatest thinkers before Socrates and Plato were born: her literature was old when Rome was founded. You are a law-maker, Mr. Cassidy: would it interest you to know that a countryman of mine who lived four hundred years before Christ, advocated universal education, free trade between nations and that only land should be taxed, according to the theory of your Henry George?"

"You don't tell me! Free trade!" To his wife Cassidy said, "Mother, you and the children play with Sam: Mr. Lee is a Democrat and I must get him into the organization."

That was the beginning of a sincere friendship between the Cassidys and the Lees, a friendship that had endured for several years. Eileen was a young woman now and she was attending business college. Jim had a position with a trucking firm.

Eileen's friends sometimes twitted her about her Mott Street boy friend and although she was ready to joke on most subjects here was one in which she could see no humor. Once when her brother teased her too persistently and called Sam her Chinese sweetheart, she flew into a rage and scratched his face.

CHAPTER VII

LEE YING was a man of sedate and regular habits. His life flowed smoothly and seldom did he permit an interruption to its even current. None but real philosophers can attain that perfect mental tranquillity which is the ideal state, but he had pretty nearly done so. He was a busy and an active man, to be sure, for his interests were far-reaching and his business was alive and profitable but he conducted his affairs with a prudence and a sagacity which minimized effort and obviated worries and discouragements. He was a good deal like one of those chess-playing automatons, popular in museums a few years ago: his movements were deliberate and sure and only the shrewd, well-calculated manipulations of his chessmen indicated the quality of the intellect behind the mechanism.

Mornings men came and went, his telephone rang, he listened to reports and he issued orders to buy and to sell: afternoons he read and he meditated. During the heat of midsummer, the season of the dragon's breath, so called, he was seldom seen outside his lofty home and its garden, for around him were green, growing things, in his ears was the whisper of moving branches and the laughter of fountains. His son was with him then, too, and in

Sam's company he was ripely content. But when autumn dried the leaves and frosts cut them down, when the boisterous winds picked them up and flung them against his windowpanes and the romping porcelain figures amid the shrubs were coated with ice, then he grew restless and lonely and he went out among men. With Sam away at college the house was empty and no number of open fires, no pressure of steam in the radiators could render it anything more than a bleak and chilly prison. The rattle of those whirling leaves was like the tapping of finger nails—signals from unhappy, shivering souls doomed for their misdeeds to face the winter blasts in nakedness. This was the time for acts of charity and kindness, according to him, and he did many. It is set down that only three hundred such acts are necessary to make a man an earthly genius but if he seeks to attain that heavenly status he must do thirteen hundred virtuous works. In Lee Ying's mind there was a grave question as to how many genuinely unselfish acts of virtue had been posted to his credit for he feared that motives of self-gratification had colored most of his benevolent deeds, so he welcomed opportunities for pure philanthropy.

To-day, warmly buttoned into an ulster of soft llama wool, he went for a walk. Mulberry Bend Park, when he came to it, was practically deserted, for the schools were in session and the autumn chill had driven grown people indoors. A gusty wind

roused dancing dust devils from the bare playgrounds: doubtless they were whirled upward by the feet of wicked ghost children capering in the cold.

One figure was seated upon a bench and Lee Ying paused when he approached it. It was that of a girl who sat huddled forward, her knees drawn together, her hands tucked inside the sleeves of her cheap imitation fur coat. She was staring fixedly ahead of her and the old man recognized Eileen Cassidy.

"Little jasmine flower!" he exclaimed in real concern. "Why do I find you bent before the wind?"

The girl looked up with a start, then she smiled. "Oh, Mr. Lee! I didn't see you. Isn't it a fierce day? Gee! It makes the tears come." She blinked her blue eyes, which were like two enormous violets, and Lee Ying saw that their lashes were wet.

"Yes. It's what we call 'two-jacket' weather in China," he told her. "The poor must plaster their limbs with paper, on such a day, and—I see that even the hot blood of youth isn't proof against it. Your veins are blue, your cheek is like the white chrysanthemum of grief. Has something gone wrong, my child?"

Eileen shook her head. "Oh, no! Only when I have any heavy thinking to do I come out here to do it. I was raised in this park, you know."

"True. It's here that Lee Sam met you."

"On this very bench. It was spring then. I was thinking of Sam a few minutes ago."

"I think of him always," smiled the old man.

"Come, walk with me, for my blood is thin and when winter approaches I become a restless and despondent wraith."

Eileen rose quickly and together they moved on. Mention of his son's name had brought a brightness to the merchant's eyes and had stirred yearnings in his famished heart: for a while he talked about the boy, telling Eileen at some length about Sam's progress in college. He checked himself finally and apologized.

"Your interest has set me going. Why do I run on about things you know?"

"But I don't know. I don't know much of anything about Sam. He never writes to us."

"Indeed? Then he is remiss ——"

"Why should he bother with the likes of us? He's a rich young man, he's taking honors in his classes and playing on the lawn tennis team, and everybody is making a great fuss over him, while we're just —shanty Irish. He's meeting lots of girls his own age and I'm only a kid."

"You are a young woman, even by Western standards," Lee Ying declared. "And a beautiful young woman, too, if you will permit me to say so, without boldness."

Eileen's face broke into a sunny smile. "Lordy! As if compliments were as common as all that. Of course I'll permit it. I'm panting for more. Why, I haven't heard a nice thing said about myself since Sam went away. You see Jim calls me 'Skinny' and

Ma's always after me with the cod-liver bottle. But—you can't expect a girl to be a raving beauty in a place like this." She waved a thin hand at the tenements fronting the drab, inhospitable square. "That needn't keep you from piling it on, Mr. Lee. I know what I look like but I love to be flattered.

"At seventeen one sees beauty only in the full-blown rose, but to older eyes a solitary wild flower is even lovelier. Have you ever heard of a 'fairy ring'?" Eileen shook her head, her Irish eyes brightened. "They occur in the Far West of your country. In the heart of some flinty, dusty sagebrush plain one occasionally comes across a tiny circle of enchantment, a little carpet of fragile blooms laid down and tended by the hand of God. They blaze with color and they perfume the air around them: the traveler pauses to revel his senses in the sight and he turns his feet aside to avoid treading on those fairy rings. He is refreshed and made humble at the phenomenon. You are like that, Miss Cassidy."

"The blarney of you! Don't tell me you're a Chinaman. But Sam doesn't think I'm good looking. He says we Americans all look funny to you: he says we're a ghastly, white-faced people and we speak an outlandish jargon. Our eyes lie in queer, straight lines: our women are bold and our men look like monkeys, with tufts of red and yellow hair on their faces. Is it true?"

Lee Ying smiled, but refused to commit himself.

"At home some of our people maintain that you white devils have ears as long as your arms. . . . I have taught Sam to ignore prejudice and to revere the good and the beautiful in your race as deeply as he honors the virtues of his own." After a moment the speaker shook his head at his own presumption and repeated, "'*I* have taught him!' As if *I* could teach *him!*"

Eileen inquired, in some curiosity, "What do you mean by that? Why do you always treat him as if —well, as if he was the important person and you were ——"

"Because he is important."

"You'd think he was the father and you were the son."

"Not that exactly. But—we believe that living men are on a journey and that it is the dead who have returned home. Sam is an illustrious traveler who passes through and I have been selected as his venerable guide, for a little way. I entertain him briefly on his journey to the Nine Springs. He is not an ordinary person, like you and me, my child: he is a Prince from the Colored Clouds."

"I don't know what that means but it has a pretty sound and I suppose it's a part of some Chinese fairy story."

Lee Ying did not explain. Meditatively he murmured: "Sometimes I wonder if I did wisely in leading him here and in keeping him in this foreign land, instead of turning his feet back towards the

country of the Rising Sun. Who knows? Probably I am homesick. You see I grow old and I dream of lotus blooms and the warm rustle of bamboo branches. One who was born in China can never forget her, Miss Cassidy: she is an ecstasy and a pain. I hear flocks of temple pigeons, with silver whistles fastened to their wings, whirling in the sky and giving off the notes of a thousand tuning forks but—I listen more closely and it is the autumn wind from the East River. It bears another ache for my bones. . . . I rest in my garden on a summer night and the sounds of Mott Street rise to my ears. They are the sounds of a busy street in the city of my birth. I hear the drums and the trumpets of tradesmen, the cries of knife grinders and conjurers singing of their trades, barbers clicking their shears, the music of pipes proclaiming a circus of trained mice."

Eileen exclaimed and the speaker smiled down at her. "Yes. Those mice run on whirling platforms and climb ladders and do feats upon little swings. Each for a kernel of corn. . . . And I do my tricks for *my* kernel of corn. . . . Women's voices rise faintly to me and I fancy they are the voices of scarlet-lipped sing-song girls, with eyebrows curved like willow wands, or blind slave girls singing to the notes of their butterfly zithers. My ears quicken until, alas, I realize that what I hear is the shrieking of Italian women bartering for vegetables, or the shrill laughter of sightseers from Times Square. A busload of Iowa school-teachers is passing. . . .

It is all strange and I never get used to it. More than a thousand years ago a countryman of mine went on a journey into foreign lands and there he beheld many extraordinary sights. The people of one nation had dogs' heads: those of another flew about like birds: those of still another had enormously long arms with which they groped in the sea for fish. Strangest of all, however, was a race with large holes through the middles of their bodies. The rich men were carried about by servants who pushed long sticks through the holes."

At the silvery tinkle of Eileen's laughter Lee Ying's benevolent face relaxed and he said: "I see things almost as strange as that, right here in New York. But I tire you with my melancholies. That is because winter comes and my illustrious visitor does not warm my house with his presence."

"You don't tire me, Mr. Lee: I adore stories. I wonder if Sam thinks we're as queer as all that, and have dogs' heads and go riding around on poles, like big doughnuts."

"No. His wisdom and his understanding is greater than mine. He is the exalted traveler and I am his contemptible guide. But tell me, little poppy seed, why do I find you alone and crying? I suspect it was something more than the wind that brought tears to your eyes."

"I'm awful blue, Mr. Lee. I've got to quit school."

"Indeed?"

"The Cassidy clan is in a bad way. Father hasn't made a dollar since he got out of the Assembly—politics either makes or breaks the Irish, you know—and Jim's a total loss. Mother isn't strong and —— Well, I've had to start hunting a job. Gee, it's hard on the feet!"

"Are you sufficiently trained ——?"

"I can burn out the bearings on a typewriter, and I can make a pencil smoke: the trouble is nobody can read my notes. My short-hand is too long. It looks like a nest of angle worms. . . . One man liked blue-eyed babies with wind-blown bobs and he didn't much care how slow they were in the office if they'd speed up after hours. He deals in cold storage poultry, but he's a torch. I had to hit him, finally, with a boyish-form chicken. And me the daughter of Irish kings! Throwing frozen poultry! . . . What I'd like is to be secretary to some high-priced executive who plays golf three days a week. You don't happen to know such a man?"

When her listener shook his head, Eileen sighed: "I suppose I'll wind up back of the ribbons and carry my lunch. But you've no idea how French heels hurt during the holiday rush. The shop-girls' Christmas yell is, 'Oh Gawd, my arch!'"

"You must complete your training," Lee Ying declared. "You are only a child."

"Sure! But that produce man will tell you I hurl a wicked chicken for one of my years."

"Will you permit me to assist ——?"

"I will not!" Miss Cassidy exclaimed. She raised a grateful face to the old man at her side and shook her head positively. "It's awfully nice of you but—I couldn't."

"It would mean no sacrifice to me. It would not even be credited to my account as a virtuous act for it would give me selfish pleasure."

"No. That would be cheating. The Cassidys are a fine old American family. 'E pluribus Erin, Unum go Bragh!' They may be poor but they're honorable and there isn't a grafter among them. I'll fight my way out, somehow."

Lee Ying's mind turned to that other girl, that other friend of his son's, and he murmured: "What a difference in travelers! The undeserving tarry and drink over long at the fountain and those who are truly thirsty push on to arrive the sooner at their journey's end. My child, you do me an injustice, for my thirteen hundred tasks are scarcely begun, but—so be it. It is, then, your ambition to become a secretary of consequence?"

"Well, at least a secretary to some man of consequence. It takes more than a shop-girl's salary to support angina pectoris and political grandeur in the same family. And a girl simply *has* to see a movie, *once* in a while."

"Turn your back to the wind and it will put no more tears in your eyes," said Lee Ying. "I shall tell Sam to write to you, and I shall chide him with neglecting the obligations of friendship."

When the importer returned to his home he telephoned to his lawyers and the senior member of the firm listened attentively to what he had to say.

"If she's as inexperienced as all that I don't see what we can do with her," the attorney told him.

"The lighter her duties, the more time she will have in which to pursue her studies."

"Good Heavens! Is this another 'art student'?"

Briefly Lee Ying explained who Eileen was. "She can open and close doors with exquisite grace. She is ambitious and I believe she will earn advancement."

"All right. Send her along."

So it came about that Eileen Cassidy took a position in the office of Carter and Pelz. Her duties were indefinite and her work was light, but her pay was good. She did not dream that Lee Ying was footing it.

The time was when an expert card player could make a good living by working the transatlantic liners, especially if aided by an accomplice or two and perhaps by a cold deck. That was in the days when draw poker was a national institution the rules of which were piously observed, and before irreverent fingers had tampered with its orthodoxy: before the introduction of deuces wild, dealer's choice, seven-card peeks and similar destructive customs and practices had degraded a scientific pastime into a mere game of chance. The metamorphosis of

this noble recreation into an undignified amusement for morons is a melancholy aftermath of the World War, so its devotees declare. They assert that the appetite for swift action, variety, excitement germinating during a period of high nervous tension is responsible for the outrage and they resent it.

Mr. Everett Himes, who for several years had commuted pretty regularly to Europe at the expense of his fellow travelers, complained bitterly that the meddling of neurotic amateurs had forced him to adopt a new profession, several new professions, as a matter of fact. He hated bridge, competition in the liquor business was keen, so therefore he had taken to traveling in the interests of a Maiden Lane diamond broker who consistently undersold the market. When the customs authorities became too deeply interested in Mr. Himes' comings and goings—more particularly in his comings—he fell back upon still other lines of endeavor in which he was skilled, such as bookmaking, stock promotions, blackmailing, pool playing. He played a very good game of pool, left-handed, did Mr. Himes: so good, in fact, that he knew exactly how many cue experts there were who could beat him. Right-handed, he was almost, but not quite, as skillful, and this unique gift of ambidexterity had stood him in good stead on more than one occasion. In Brussels, for instance, he had challenged the local champion and had practiced assiduously in a public hall, wielding his cue in the ordinary manner and covering all

wagers laid against him. On the evening of the match he had dismayed his opponent, and his audience as well, by playing left-handed. For them it had been a disagreeable experience and had resulted in strong feelings of anti-Americanism.

At the time of our introduction Mr. Himes was in New York and for reasons best known to himself he had interrupted his regular trans-atlantic trips and for the moment he was avoiding Maiden Lane as if it were under quarantine. On this day he was entertaining a lady for luncheon at his hotel: she was a middle-aged, florid, flamboyant woman who showed traces of considerable good looks. She went by the name of Stevens but Himes addressed her familiarly as Esther.

When they had finished their luncheon and the nearby tables were deserted Mrs. Stevens said:

"Thanks for the whoopee, Everett, now let's get down to the dirty work. You didn't ask me here out of politeness, so what's on your mind, if such there be?"

Himes grinned amiably. "All business, as usual, eh? Tell me, first, how things are breaking?"

"They might be better and they might be worse. I manage to get by."

"Would you be interested in a quick-money proposition?"

"Would a duck swim?" Mrs. Stevens retorted, then she added cautiously: "But no diamonds,

Everett; I never got anything out of an iceman but ice. I'll wear 'em but I won't smuggle 'em."

"I'll put you so you can buy some and pay the duty. How's that so-called niece of yours?"

"Who? Mona?"

"Have you got more than one?"

"She's all right. Why?"

"Doing anything?"

"Oh, a little chiseling here and there. She was posing for a while, then I tried to get her in pictures——"

"Pretty as ever, is she?"

"She's got it on a lot of those picture girls, but—Lord, you can't get a toehold in the studios. Most of them have moved out to Hollywood, anyhow. If Mona was lighted right she'd screen fine."

"Can she act?"

Mrs. Stevens smiled. "She can cry. She's cried us into room and board for two years now. The art racket started off good, and it seemed to be made to order—the undressing and everything—but illustrators are a cheap gang. One fellow fell for her but when I put the bee to him he lit a flare. He squawked from here to Frisco and that killed it."

"Funny I never got into the moving-picture game," Himes murmured meditatively. "I'd have mopped up. Same with the liquor business. Now the foreigners have got 'em both cornered."

After a moment the woman inquired: "Well, what's the new deadfall, and where do I head in?"

"I don't know until I give Mona the double-o. She's got to look pretty."

"Say! She doesn't look a day over fifteen."

"Too young!"

"Well, eighteen," Mrs. Stevens said in an effort at compromise.

"I've got a set-up," Himes declared. "Honest, Esther, it's soft."

"Hm-m! I suppose it's so soft you'll want the big end."

"Well, it's coming to me."

"Yes? I've heard of these soft set-ups. Nothing doing, Himey. If you need us to close your deal the money will have to be cut three ways."

"There you go, before you know what it's all about."

"Business is business."

"All right, greedy. There's enough in it for everybody if it's handled right. I got the idea on my last trip over and I worked it out later in Paris. On the way across I met a Jane from the corn belt, a terrible sap but out to see the world, understand? A born bilker and didn't know it. Well, she tried to make me," the speaker smiled bleakly, "and she spilled about all she knew. It didn't take long. She's a painter, or something, and she's taking a ride at the expense of an old man who loves art."

"Ah-h! I see the dawn."

"She met his son at Eastern—that's a big college or something—and they were so agreeable to each

other that the old man sent her abroad to do over the Loove. She intends to take two years at it."

"Is *that* all she came out with?"

"I saw something of her in Paris—helped her get set—and again on my way back from Holland. We were buddies by that time. Now then, here's the punch: papa is a Chinaman!"

"That's new slang to me," confessed Himes' listener. "What's a 'Chinaman'?"

"I'm talking pure English. He's a Chink, a yockaman! And he's lousy with coin."

"Who? Which papa? The boy?"

"Both of 'em."

"Snap out of it, Himey. You've been sleeping on your hip in some laundry."

"Yeah? Well, I'm telling you. Here's a proposition, as wide open as a gate. It's Lee Ying."

"Lee Ying?"

"Nobody else. He's the richest Oriental in the country and his boy is wild about white girls."

"They're all wild about white girls," Mrs. Stevens declared with a curl of her lip. "But what ails you, Himey? Do you think Mona and I are out to lay China boys? When we get that low we'll work the Oriental dance halls. And we won't cut you in on it, either. Now I know you've been cooking on a peanut lamp."

"Listen, sister, you've got a peanut mind. You always were a dumb ox."

"I don't see ——"

"Of course, you don't see."

"—— and I can't take a chance with Mona. Why, I'm the only mother she's got and she's as dear to me as ——"

"Don't get throaty, Esther, or you'll have me bawling, too. Mona will be safer than wheat. If you'll get off the air for a minute and stand by for station announcements I'll tell you what it's all about."

The motherly Mrs. Stevens agreed to this. "All right. I never lost anything by listening. Spread your hand."

For fully an hour the two talked with their heads together and it was plain that the woman was deeply interested.

CHAPTER VIII

A LADY was calling upon Mr. Lee, so Moy announced. Sam declined to see her and went on with his studies. A moment or two later Moy returned to say that the caller bore a message from a mutual friend and requested the privilege of speaking with Sam over the house phone.

No women either visited Sam's apartment or telephoned him nowadays so he rose, went into the hall and took the instrument. An immature, uncultivated voice answered him, it stammered a breathless explanation of her insistence. She was a friend of Alice Hart's, she was downstairs and wished to see Sam on a matter of importance. She craved only a moment of his time. Would he speak to her if she came up?

"Why, of course," Sam told her. A friend of Alice Hart's. With a message! What could this mean? Nervously he paced the hall until the buzzer sounded, then he opened the door.

A young girl, a very pretty young girl, stood upon the threshold. She smiled at Sam, edged her way inside and set down a suitcase, saying meanwhile: "You're Mr. Lee, aren't you? You're awful nice to let me come up. My! You're harder to see

than Hoover." She giggled and showed twin dimples in her fresh round cheeks.

Sam bowed politely, he led the way to the living room and stood aside inviting his visitor to enter and be seated.

The girl was plainly embarrassed and not a little excited at her own temerity, she giggled again and stared in frank amazement at her surroundings. For the moment she appeared unable to find her voice, so Sam helped her by asking:

"Did you say you are a friend of Miss Hart's?"

The stranger nodded, then shook her head. "Well, not a friend exactly. But she gave me your name—I got it from her. I used to know her. She was awful nice to me. She's an awful nice young lady."

"Charming."

"Yes. She certainly is." Another pause. More nervous giggles.

"Where did you know her?"

"Oh! I—knew her for a long time! She used to tell me about you: how nice you were and everything. She said you could help me, and you can. Oh, Mr. Lee, I'm in an awful fix!" The speaker's eyes dilated, she strained forward. "You *will*, won't you?"

"How can I do so until I know your trouble?" Sam parried, on his guard. He did not feel at ease with this girl, there was something both artful and artificial in her bearing: she was little more than a

child and yet there was a peculiar sophistication about her which did not pleasantly impress him. She was crude and common but she was very pretty, nevertheless, and there is a disarming appeal to youthful beauty. In this case it had its effect.

"Well, I'll tell you how it is," the visitor explained. "There's just mother and I and she's kind of an invalid so I have to work. I'm selling lace things. They give 'em to me to sell, you know, and I get folks to buy them. They're awful pretty things and lots cheaper than you could buy them ——"

"But, Miss ——"

"Stevens. Mona Stevens."

"I have no use for lace things."

"You just wait and see. You don't have to buy anything but please don't turn me down till you look. They're such nice things it's fun to show them, honest. I sold some to Miss Hart but—you have to tell fibs and everything to get to see people. I guess you'd fib if you had a sick mother." The caller's diffidence was subsiding and now that she had explained her business she made it plain that she did not propose to leave without doing her best to effect a sale. Her selling talk was amateurish but she capitalized her youth and her charm to the fullest extent: she smiled and she dimpled, she allowed no interruptions to her flow of conversation. She declared that her laces and her linens were so

cheap they must have been smuggled, really, but of course she asked no questions.

It offended Sam to realize that he had been victimized by an ordinary peddler and he vowed never to permit a repetition of the occurrence, but now that the girl was actually in his home, he felt bound to treat her with courtesy. Accordingly he resigned himself to the situation.

One thing sure, his visitor certainly did know Alice Hart for she spoke of her again, she referred to Sam's car and to the fact that Alice was in Paris by reason of his assistance. Sam selected the two finest breakfast sets the girl had and offered to write a check for them.

But she refused to take payment at the moment. She did not have the complete sets with her and how did he know that she wouldn't disappear with the money? She made it a practise, so she declared, to accept settlement only upon delivery of the entire orders. It was awful nice of him to buy such expensive things from a stranger. But they weren't strangers now, were they? She felt as if she had known him an awful long time. Miss Hart had said such nice things about him. It was awful hard for a girl to get along without friends, and she got awful lonesome —— No fun nor anything: just caring for a sick mother. Not even a movie. And speaking of movies, her ambition was to get into pictures. She had done some posing for artists and it paid well but—those artists were awful. They were awful

bold. A pretty girl had no business around a studio, she'd tell the world. She bet she could tell Sam some things that would open his eyes. Awful things. She'd do *anything* to get into moving pictures and Mr. Lee came from California, didn't he? Was it true, all this talk about the awful wickedness in Hollywood? And would he advise her how to get out there?

Miss Stevens appeared willing to talk all the morning and Sam had a time getting rid of her.

On the second evening thereafter his doorbell rang and to his annoyance he found that the forward little person was back again with his two breakfast sets. He wondered how she had managed to get past the elevator man who had explicit instructions to announce all callers. She expected his check, this time.

She expected even more than a check, it transpired. She and Sam were old friends, now, and presuming upon their acquaintance she had brought with her a costly evening wrap which she insisted upon showing. He didn't have to buy it, of course, but she proposed to leave it with him overnight. She'd bet he'd fall in love with it. It would make an awful nice present to his girl ——. She laughed scornfully when he assured her that he had no girl. Mona admitted that she was pretty simple but she knew better than that. A handsome young man, with all his money! She'd bet he had a dozen girls running after him.

For no reason whatever she took it for granted that Sam was as pleased to see her as she was to see him: again she stayed longer than was necessary.

When at last she had gone Sam directed Moy to replace the wrap in its box and to hand it back to the girl when she returned for it. This creature puzzled and annoyed him and certainly she was harder to keep out than a roach. All the same he did not propose to have her running in and out of the premises at will, nor would he permit himself to be imposed upon, however ingenuous she pretended to be.

But the package remained in his possession for several days. Then late one rainy afternoon Mona rang up. She explained that she had been ill and expressed the hope that Sam liked the lace evening wrap because already she had kept it longer than she had promised to keep it; she was allowed to retain articles of real value only for a limited time. Sam told her that he could not buy the garment.

There was a pause, then the girl asked him, feebly, to return it. She was too ill to venture out in such weather or to argue the matter: she and her mother lived nearby, it would be a great accommodation ——

He promised to send it within the hour.

"Couldn't you stop in for a minute?" Mona inquired. "I want to see you about something awful important. You've been so nice to Mother and I,

we want your advice on something. Please! It won't take a minute ——"

Sam made an excuse but the girl was piteously insistent and he ended by agreeing.

He had no difficulty in finding the address, the Stevens women were living in a somewhat better house than he had expected and when he rang their apartment bell Mona herself opened the door for him.

She was in a pretty disorder but appeared unconscious of it, she welcomed him gratefully and insisted that he remove his overcoat and sit down near the gas grate. There was no denying the fact that this girl was uncommonly attractive, to-day she was subdued, distressed and Sam could not resist a feeling of compassion. Her immaturity was appealing and she really had much charm. She informed him that her mother was out, for the moment, but would soon be back and meanwhile she simply had to talk to somebody wiser than herself. She sat down beside him on the couch and immediately plunged into an explanation of her difficulty.

She began by admitting that she had deceived him and her mother, too, about that wrap. She had not taken it on commission but she had bought it. The price had been ridiculously low and offered such a sure and handsome profit that she had plunged, for once. She would have no difficulty in selling it, as soon as she could get out and around, but tomorrow the rent on the apartment was due and

there was no money in the house. Her mother would be heart-broken, she'd have a "spell" when she discovered the truth, and—her spells were dangerous. If Sam would consent to hold the wrap as security and advance the amount of the rent—just for a few days —— She'd be able to dispose of the wrap in no time. Honest, she would. It embarrassed her dreadfully to ask a favor of a comparative stranger, but it was only a loan and Sam would be protected. She was so inexperienced in business —— Only he would have to come to the rescue quickly, before her mother returned or —— Well, the rent was eighty dollars.

Inwardly Sam smiled. What a cheap, transparent ruse. What a fool he was. These white people, these Americans! What grafters, what beggars, high and low. But here was an experience well worth its price. He took eight ten-dollar bills from his wallet, folded them and laid them on a sewing basket at his elbow then moved to go. To his surprise, Mona bowed her face in her hands and began to sob convulsively. He tried to quiet her.

"Mona!" came a stern and disapproving exclamation. Sam had not heard the door open but open it had and in it stood a woman, Mona's mother beyond doubt. She was a florid woman, a person of some force and authority, judging by her voice and by her expression. She looked to be anything except an invalid. "What are you crying about?

And who is this—young man?" the mother demanded.

Sam rose, he felt his cheeks tingle: he stood silently while Mona tried to make him known. It seemed to him that the girl badly bungled the introduction and that she stammered and hesitated unnecessarily. Poor Mona actually cowered before her mother's gaze. But her behavior was no more strange than the latter's: at the sound of his name, Mrs. Stevens advanced upon him almost threateningly.

"Oh, *that's* who you are!" she cried. "What are you doing here? Why did you sneak in while I was away? Mona told me—" The speaker's eyes fell upon the banknotes on the sewing basket and they dilated, she started, flung out an accusing hand. With a histrionic change of tone she cried hoarsely: "My God! What's the meaning of *this?*"

"Your daughter will explain." Sam told her stiffly. He took his coat and hat, but the mother planted herself before him crying:

"Just a minute! I understand now why she's been acting so queer. She's been like this ever since you had her up in your apartment. She told me about meeting you, being in your place and—I suspected something. Now, the minute my back is turned you slip in here and—and give her *money!*" Mrs. Stevens seized the handful of bills and brandished them: a look of loathing and of scorn distorted her

features. She repeated the word "money" and it was a hissing upon her lips. "If you think money can square ——"

"Madame!" Sam interrupted, his face slowly whitening with anger. "You're insulting."

"Is that so? Well, I propose to have the truth before you get out of here. Mona's a good girl—or she was until you met her." Fiercely the speaker whirled upon her daughter, exclaiming: "Out with it! Tell me everything. I want to know what happened to you."

"Oh, *mother!*" The words came in a quavering cry eloquent with meaning: they were a confession and a plea that would have moved the hardest heart. "I didn't know! I—he—he was so good and so kind to me. And he promised ——" A convulsive sob racked the speaker and interrupted the penitent recital of Sam's dastardly promises. "I'll kill myself. Honest I will." These words were wrung from an anguished breast, they were followed by throaty gaspings and chokings. Mona writhed in the bitterness of her betrayal.

Her horrified parent smothered a scream, her eyes rolled, she tottered, she clutched her throat, her ample bosom heaved. Followed a moving—a moving-picture—exhibition of intense feeling. Mrs. Stevens, slowly at first and then more rapidly, inflated and deflated her lungs, an exercise calculated to produce the swift heart beats and thoracic con-

vulsions which in approved studio practice accompany strong emotional situations.

Sam looked on in mingled aversion and curiosity. He was indignant and amused, he felt ineffably cheapened by his part in this sordid comedy. Mrs. Stevens, meanwhile, continued assiduously to pump her bellows, her chest rose and fell, she shrank and she dilated, she shook and she pulsated like some stranded marine creature: she was the picture of outraged and out-of-breath motherhood. Moans, grief-stricken incoherencies, apoplectic vituperations burst from her lips.

Sam slipped an arm into the sleeve of his overcoat, whereupon the mother faced him theatrically:

"Oh, you wicked, wicked man! She's only an innocent child and she's all I've got. You—you unfeeling monster. You fiend, to deceive a pure, young girl. My God, this is terrible! I—I—What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to leave you to your deep breathing," Sam told her. "But first I'm going to relieve you of my eighty dollars." With a swift movement he seized the mother's wrist.

Mrs. Stevens resisted, she struck at him but he tore the money out of her fingers. She raised her voice in a storm of abuse but he cautioned her:

"If you make a disturbance, I'll call the police."

"You *rat!*"

Sam dropped the crumpled bills into the blue

flames of the gas grate and they promptly ignited, then he wiped his fingers as if they had been soiled.

"You dirty Chinaman!" the mother screamed. "You haven't heard the last —— You'll pay for this."

She was still reviling him, still breathing vengeance, her injured daughter was still weeping torrents of tears when Sam passed out of the door and closed it behind him.

Never in all his life had he felt so outraged or experienced such a sense of betrayal as at this moment—except perhaps when those Mulberry Bend hoodlums had despoiled him of his beloved fighting crickets—and now, as then, he wanted to strike back. That same current of insane fury poured through him, he longed to sink his fingers into that purple-faced harpy. . . . The blackmailer! The toad! Ten thousand curses on her. What depravity. What groveling, gutter-snatching greed, to use her own flesh and blood as a buzzard's bait. And that doll-faced, hypocritical offspring of hers was no better. . . . Anything for a few paltry dollars. *Chinese* dollars! He was a loathsome yellow man, but not too loathsome for those bloodsuckers to prey upon. . . . Was all the world a festering pollution and were all Western women scavengers, white seagulls screaming over a rotten fish? It seemed so.

What would his honorable father say to this? By what benevolent philosophy could he reconcile

himself to an outrage of this sort? But, for that matter, how could he, Sam, explain his own stupidity in falling a victim to such a pair? It certainly reflected no credit upon him to walk into a trap of this sort. . . . Upon cooler consideration Sam decided to keep this disgraceful experience to himself and profit by it, after the practice of a prudent farmer who buries a stinking carcass to enrich his field. It was a lesson he could well take to heart.

It was not easy for a stranger to gain access to Lee Ying without first making known the nature of his business, but Everett Himes managed it. Having succeeded, he took up in roundabout fashion a matter which caused the old importer to listen attentively. For a while the latter made no comment but finally he inquired:

"In what way does this concern you, Mr. Himes? I don't understand why I hear of this misfortune through your lips instead of through the mother's."

"I'm just an old friend of the family and she confided in me—came to me for advice. I'm an ordinary, common-sense business man and I said to her, 'Mr. Lee is a business man and a fine citizen. What's the sense of raving over something that can't be helped and talking about lawyers until——'"

"Is it proposed to place this in the hands of an attorney?"

Mr. Himes gestured apologetically. "The poor woman doesn't know what to do. She's not responsible for what she does or says. And can you blame her? You know, a woman always yells for a lawyer. But I hate them, Mr. Lee. I don't trust them, either: all they do is tangle things up and tell you this can't be done or that can't be done. When I have a business matter to iron out I always go right to the other fellow, get it straight and then call in a lawyer to put his O K on it. It's the quickest and the cheapest way. Am I right? Give and take: put yourself in the other fellow's shoes. That's my motto."

"This is hardly a 'business matter' and I'm afraid I cannot fully credit your story for my son has told me nothing——"

"Naturally. I'm the only outsider that knows a thing about it. And it's nothing to broadcast. Why, I've known Mona since she was a child: she's almost like my own kid. Believe *me,* it came as a shock. I said——"

"Pardon! How did this happen?"

"Just like I told you: she's an ambitious youngster, always trying to get ahead. She was picking up a few pennies by selling lace things and—— She's only a child, Mr. Lee. That's what makes it so rotten, see? A minor! If she was of legal age——"

"Selling lace, you say?"

"Precisely. Your son made several purchases. He

got her up to his apartment and ——" Mr. Himes shrugged, turned up his palms. "That's the worst of a young fellow having his own apartment. I talked to the elevator man and he verified what she said. She wasn't the first girl, either, but that's the boy's affair. I suppose he and Mona had a drink or two. It's pretty fierce around the colleges —— Anyhow she broke down and told her mother the whole story: said she didn't know right from wrong." . . . The speaker sighed, shook his head sadly, regretfully. "Mr. Lee, I blame the mothers nowadays more than I blame the girls. Why don't they put 'em wise?"

Thus far Lee Ying had sat as motionless as an idol, his face had been expressionless, his hands had rested in his lap. Now he stirred.

"You are a stranger to me," he announced. "This charge is easy to bring and as hard to prove as to disprove."

"No trouble about that," Himes declared. "It will prove itself in time. That's the unfortunate part."

"Before speaking with my son I would like to talk with the girl and her mother."

"I assumed you would. I think you should do so, right away."

"If he is guilty of indiscretion I shall make suitable and satisfactory arrangements to ——"

"Good!" Mr. Himes beamed amiably. "I know

you Chinese and I'm certainly glad I put it up to you as man to man."

"Suitable provision will be made to care for the —the flower of inadvertence. After all it is not an extraordinary or unnatural occurrence. The blame is hard to apportion."

Mr. Himes furrowed his brow, he hesitated. "Frankly, sir, I'm afraid it involves something more than what you suggest."

"Indeed?"

"You see when a kid like Mona falls for a guy, she *falls,* head over heels. Money doesn't mean a thing to her. She's crazy about him and—she's glad her condition is what it is. There's something mighty sacred about an innocent girl's love and trust: it gets you, and I don't mean maybe. Of course all her mother cares about is her daughter's happiness. She's broad-minded that way, and ——"

"So? It is, then, a question of marriage?" Through the narrow apertures between their lids Lee Ying's watchful eyes blazed.

"Good Lord, what else? I hope you don't think I came here to —— Why, *Mr. Lee!* This isn't anything that *money* can square!" The speaker was shocked, grieved, indignant. "Well, hardly! They're not common people. *Money—!* They'd be insulted. It's the girl's good name, her reputation: a mother's pride."

"Bring them here at once," Lee Ying ordered.

He was still seated in his big carved chair when,

an hour later, Himes returned with Mrs. Stevens and Mona. Then he rose and bowed gravely to them. When he saw the girl his heart sank.

Followed a trying half hour for the father. When it was over and he was again alone he felt old and feeble and exhausted, for his world had crashed. His son, the Favorite of Heaven, a common man, a deity with feet of clay! Mournfully, but without bitterness he exclaimed:

"Alas, that a man cannot for the space of a single day subdue his lower nature!"

He smote his hands together and a servant appeared: in a lifeless voice the merchant said:

"Bring me my prayer robes."

The man fetched him an elaborate garment, stiff with embroideries of gold and black, a small round cap and a pair of silken slippers. Lee Ying put them on, he washed and perfumed his hands, then he passed into a small room the presence of which no stranger would have suspected.

It was a shrine, a tiny, secret place of worship the door to which was a sliding panel ornamented with storks and dragons. A smiling idol sat upon an ivory throne, a bronze bowl of paper prayers stood before it, smoldering joss sticks gave off thin streamers of smoke, Lee Ying moved slowly and with pain, as if he trod upon sharp stones: stiffly he knelt before the image and into the celestial regions drifted the incense of his devotion. He prayed long and earnestly, but his plea, abridged and trans-

lated would have been, "Show me the way of righteousness, and give me the strength to follow it."

Later that day he wired for Sam to come home.

Lee Ying sat bolt upright in his high-backed chair. He held himself thus with an effort for much of the vigor had gone out of him: he was scorched and feeble. His voice issued from his dry lips in a rustle. Before him, as if in audience upon some royal personage, stood Sam. He was white, he neither moved nor spoke.

"The princely man puts righteousness first. The man of high station who has courage without righteousness is a menace to the state: the common man who has courage without righteousness is nothing more than a brigand. What can be made of him who is pleased with advice but will not meditate upon it, who assents to admonition and pursues his selfish way? . . . A son's love finds its expression in obedience to his father's teachings and I have urged you to live a good, a self-sufficient and a virtuous life. It has been my prayer that your grave would be soaked with the tears of an hundred honorable sons, not the bastard sons of foreign gutter women. This girl is with child."

Sam stirred nervously and wet his lips to speak but the father raised an admonitory hand and continued in a deliberation that was trying:

"Wait! The charge is made, you can defend yourself later. First hear me. Your mother was

of fine birth, her ancestors and mine were sash wearers. I am a man of humble heart but my estimate of them is proud: I am surer of my race, my blood and my breeding than of myself. In you I recognized one of even better stuff than we, a godling, and I gave thanks that Heaven had appointed me your guide, your counselor. If you have stumbled, strayed, if you have polluted our blood with the blood of an inferior woman—remember I say 'if'—the guilt is as much mine as yours. Together we shall pay. Women mean nothing, your amusements do not concern me, but your future is another matter. It is a family matter: a matter that concerns the honor of our name. The girl insists that you marry her and the law is on her side. It is seemly that we abide by the laws and the customs of this country, no matter how senseless they appear as compared with our own. If you have done wrong, it is too late to argue: the price is set; there is no bargaining. You will marry her at once. . . . But the New Year approaches, when *all* our debts must be settled and when those who cannot pay must expiate—the lanterns are not put out until every account is closed. Those who have preceded us, as well as the living, are implacably firm in seeking what is their due and we—I, at least—have been false to them. I shall, therefore, meet my debt in the only honorable way. I could not live to see you linked in marriage to a woman of the sewer, and I doubt if you could long endure the disgrace

of such a union. But that is for you to decide. The sword of our family hangs in my room. When you have set right your folly I shall ascend to Pan Yi. If it pleases you to go hand in hand with me, so be it."

"May I speak?" Sam inquired hoarsely.

The father inclined his head. "Don't feel that I have condemned you without a hearing. Speak truthfully, therefore, and don't fear my anger for I have none. I feel only grief at my failure and anguish at my vanished hopes—if what I fear is true. It is a pity that I built them so high and so wide. I should have remembered that he who raises himself on tiptoe cannot stand firm and he who stretches his legs wide apart cannot walk."

"Well, there's no truth in the story," Sam declared. "It's all a lie."

A silence ensued which Lee Ying broke by asking: "You owe the girl nothing? . . . She has no claim on you?"

"Nothing! None whatever! This is extortion, blackmail. I've paid it, in one way or another, to every American I ever knew. Yes, ever since I was a boy. The children here in this neighborhood always preyed on me. I had to buy their friendship. It has been the same in college. Men, women, they're all alike. They merely use me for their own profit. That girl you sent to Paris—she was willing to sell herself, for a price. She as much as told

me so, but I had some pride. This creature is even lower. She isn't fit to touch."

Lee Ying rose and went to his son, his lips were moving, his eyes were wet. He enfolded the boy in his arms, his bony hands caressed him, stroked him, patted him. He could not speak.

It is said that the Chinese are unemotional but nothing could be more untrue. Self-control is an obsession with them and they carry it to extremes, nevertheless their emotions are deep and easily aroused. Pride, sensitiveness, honor, horror of debt, these are Chinese characteristics: so, too, are filial piety, gratitude, love of children, all of which are enormously overdeveloped.

To them, parenthood is holy. Wifehood and motherhood are title deeds to honors compared with which other earthly honors are insignificant. The commonest Chinese woman, for instance—even one who professed frailty—would die a thousand deaths before making a mock of her motherhood, and to Lee Ying, therefore, it had seemed incredible that avarice could prompt a false charge against his son. But Sam had spoken, the truth was out. Such deceit, such cunning was more than a crime, it was a profanation and a sacrilege.

Lee Ying did not question his boy further, he was content with Sam's denial.

"We will say no more about it and you will forgive my faltering faith," he declared. "I rejoice that you have not defiled yourself. My heart is

warmed, the sap rises in my limbs, there is a song on my lips. I feel the peace and the happiness of one who, after much trouble, rests beside red poppy fields and sees the silkworms gorging on the mulberry trees. Sit here at my side and tell me, not about this vile experience, but about your studies and your play, your comings and your goings—the little things which a mother yearns to hear. I am both mother and father to you and you are both my son and my daughter: your honor is precious to me and in your voice I hear the music of harps and of mallets striking on temple bells. See? Tears come to my eyes. Humor me, for I am a foolish, starved old man. I—I would like to hold your hand in mine."

CHAPTER IX

NATURALLY Sam told his father all there was to tell about the Stevens affair, which in truth was not much, and of course Lee Ying was indignant. His indignation was the greater because he did not hold women, as a whole, in high esteem and considered them unimportant creatures, except from a biological standpoint. Like all Chinese he revered maternity, but he was distrustful and mildly contemptuous of women as individuals. The effrontery, the wickedness of this pair in presuming to capitalize their only worth-while function and the one thing about them which he held sacred, strengthened his feeling of contempt and argued, in their particular case, an irreverence, a moral depravity inexpressibly shocking.

The act of which Sam was accused did not in itself concern him; to the Oriental mind it was nothing, but the alleged result concerned him deeply. The pollution of his strain, the mixing of his blood was a thing Lee Ying could not tolerate.

Observers have stated that Chinese religions, of which there are many, are pretty loose and that they are more of a convention than a force. This may be true, but it is generally agreed that the Chinese

are intensely religious at heart and pay honest homage to at least two gods, two ideals, namely, ancestors and beauty. If the word "beauty" is used in the sense of perfection, moral virtue, then indeed it pretty well embraces what Lee Ying called his religion and the religion he had taught his son.

The elder man's native piety had been almost wholly unaffected by his contacts with the Christian faith, hence his vindictive anger at the outrage done him, but with the younger it was different. Sam was quite as angry as his father and he smarted equally at the attempted wrong against him, nevertheless he saw nothing sacrilegious in it. Nor could he think of Mona and her mother as typical representatives of their sex. Western training had bred in him a quixotic reverence for women. Respect is perhaps a better word. Women, that is to say, white women, intrigued him: they were a pleasing and an exciting mystery with which his mind was ceaselessly employed. It was a silly illusion, no doubt, probably a mere personal weakness, nevertheless he cherished it. Common sense argued that this experience, coupled with his others, should have shattered his faith in them, and that it should have rendered him proud, joyous to be Chinese but—somehow it failed to do so. And that fact depressed him.

What ailed him, he wondered. Almost every American he knew had treated him as an enemy and yet he excused them. In spite of their disre-

gard, their scorn, he found them companionable, understandable, likeable; in looks, in customs, in characteristics, in mental traits they were not as antipathetic to him as his own people. Here was a reaction in that complicated chemistry of race impossible to explain. Inheritance, blood, tradition, are supposed to count for everything and yet in him they counted for little or nothing. It was damnable. Where were the old theories? Was this racial difference a thing physical or psychological, a thing real or imaginary? Why, in his case, were reason and impulse always in conflict with each other? Behaviorism! That was a new word and it covered a new trend of psychological investigation. Is a man's behavior—that is to say, the workings of his mind, his likes, his dislikes, his appetites and his revulsions—inherited or acquired?

According to this latest ism there is no such thing as inheritance: mental traits, dispositions, capabilities, tendencies, are the result of nurture not nature. The human being at birth is a bit of unformed protoplasm, wholly lacking in so-called instincts, which squirms in answer only to physical stimuli. Its complex development is the result of "conditioning" by the attacks of outside influences.

Well, his case bore out the heretical doctrine: he was less a product of nature than of nurture. But after all, what did it matter? What good did it do to ask a thousand questions of himself when there was no answer to any one of them? He was

no psychologist. He was merely an unhappy and bewildered young man who somehow could not find himself.

Lee Ying's faith in Sam's rectitude was firm, nevertheless he did not trust overmuch in the comfortable belief that evil will work its own undoing, nor did he shut his eyes to the possible results of the charge laid against his son. On the following morning, therefore, he took the boy down to his lawyers and put the matter unreservedly into their hands with instructions to spare no expense in protecting the good name of Lee.

There, for the first time in several months, Sam and Eileen met and he learned about her position with Carter and Pelz. Eileen, by now, had made herself more than a mere ornament, she had mastered the switchboard, she was the fastest typist the firm had and was becoming an actual force in the outer office. Her shorthand, too, was getting better.

Sam's coming threw her into something of a panic, especially as he treated her, for once, like a grown up young lady. He had always charmed her with his pretty attentions, he complimented her to-day so sincerely and so feelingly that she blushed and sparkled. He flattered her doubly by stopping to talk with her a second time when the interview with Mr. Carter was over. It was a respectful attention but it led to results.

A half hour after Lee Ying and his son had gone

Mr. Carter was disturbed by loud and angry voices outside his sanctum, followed by a slamming and a crashing accompanied by cries, protests, exclamations, shrieks. In alarm the attorney poked his head out of his door, then hurriedly withdrew it in time to dodge a soaring law book. A tornado was raging and it was wreaking havoc in the place: Eileen Cassidy had run amuck and the three other girls had sought refuge in separate quarters. Mr. Carter's own secretary, the oldest and the most settled member of the force, was crouched in the shelter of her desk and was weakly defending herself against a storm of pamphlets, stenographers' notebooks, bound volumes, waste baskets and light articles of office equipment, the which Eileen was sending her way as fast as she could gather them up.

The room was a sight, the scene was a disgrace: nothing like it had ever occurred here and both Mr. Carter and Mr. Pelz were momentarily paralyzed. Fortunately, there were no clients in the anteroom, or if there had been they had fled.

Eileen was defiantly crying: "Sure, I took him into the vault, and I showed him the filing system. Now—file *this,* in *your*—system."

"This" was a woven wire letter tray filled with correspondence. The tray struck with a crash, its contents scattered. The object of the attack uttered a thin shriek and tried to crawl into the lowest drawer of her desk.

Mr. Carter bounded to the rescue, he seized

Eileen and disarmed her of a pole used to open and close windows. This pole was fitted with a metal stud and with it Miss Cassidy evidently intended to hook her opponent and drag her out of her cyclone cellar as a woodchuck is dragged out of its burrow.

"Good Heavens!" Mr. Carter exclaimed. "Good Heavens! What's this? Here, Pelz, help me—hold her. Or—call a policeman."

"Make it an ambulance," Eileen shrilled. "I'll lay her on a hospital cot if it's the last —— Say, boss! You needn't get rough. Pick a guy your own size."

Mr. Carter lifted the speaker and bore her from the immediate scene of action. Mr. Pelz, meanwhile, ran to the assistance of the weeping secretary, then lent his aid to the other two girls.

It took a while to get at the truth of the affair, for none of the four combatants was in condition to talk coherently. Oddly enough, the first one to recover her power of speech was Eileen, and the loudest if not the clearest explanation of the affray came from her albeit her remarks were directed at her fellow hirelings, and they were elliptical in meaning.

Call him a greasy Chinaman, would they? All right, one against three was ordinary fighting odds for the Irish. She'd stand for sassy remarks and insulting giggles but dirty cracks were out. She had warned that long drink of soup to lay off her. It was time there was a head to the office, anyhow.

Call a copper, eh? Hooey! Underscore hooey, and put it in quotes. She knew every cop in the city. Sam Lee was a friend of hers and he was a gentleman and if any limber-fingered copy cat thought she could ride a friend of hers, and a good client of the firm, she was all wet. Period. Paragraph. Discharged? Not at all. What the dickens had she done to be fired? Interrogation point. If there was any firing to be done, she'd tell Mr. Carter where to begin. Stop.

Order, of a sort, was finally restored but Mr. Carter's secretary was completely unnerved, she was through for the day. She was ill, she was trembling like a leaf, and of course she would refuse, oh, positively! to step her foot in the office again as long as this common little Mick remained in it.

"Mick!" The Rose of Erin quivered, her small hand groped for another missile, but as Mr. Carter's grip on her tightened, she retorted derisively that if the former speaker never came back it would be too soon. Perhaps it would then be possible to get something done in the office. She, Eileen, had been doing most of the other's work, anyhow, and she could do it all, standing on her head in a tomato can. This from the daughter of Irish kings!

When Mr. Carter had finally reached the bottom of the affair and had weighed the evidence he permitted his secretary to go home and, being a just man, he did not insist unduly upon her returning. He admired spunk and he treasured loyalty:

he had been thinking, anyhow, of promoting Eileen. That night he laughed heartily when he told his wife about the disgraceful affair.

"So you've been putting up for my salary. Well, I want to pay it back." It was Eileen speaking. Several weeks had passed, she had stopped in at Lee Ying's on her way home. The merchant murmured something about not understanding, but Eileen frowned at him.

"Oh, yes, you do! I'm Mr. Carter's secretary now. I'm self-supporting and I'm beholden to nobody."

"He promised to keep it a secret," the old man complained weakly.

"Pshaw! How can a man keep a secret from a good secretary? It was safe with that dud he used to have but I've got something to wear a hat on besides hair. Come clean, Mr. Lee, the Cassidys can't owe anything to anybody."

"You accused me of being Irish one day when I complimented you," Lee Ying said with a smile. "May I compliment you again by saying you are more Chinese than Irish?"

"Is that a compliment?"

"I consider it so. You abhor debt: you are sensitive of your honor and loyal to your friends. Oh, Mr. Carter told me about that brawl. He called it a typhoon and it amused him, but it stirred me deeply and I did not laugh. You are Chinese, also,

in your love of the beautiful. See, you wear one small, single bloom upon your coat. Why not a bunch?"

"Economy!"

Lee Ying shook his head.

"Well, isn't one spray just as pretty as a whole bouquet?"

"Prettier! Lovelier! You see? . . . A Chinese criminal on his way to execution will stop and buy or beg a single honeysuckle bloom and inhale its fragrance, worship its beauty. . . . You also possess another trait that is peculiarly Chinese: you know how to be alone. Solitude, the leisure to know ourselves and to meditate upon the truth is a necessity to us."

"I don't see very much difference in people, Mr. Lee."

"There isn't much and it is mostly superficial—a matter of pigmentation and bone structure. Spiritual differences are largely the result of background and racial history. My people have acquired a repose, a philosophy, a reverence for age and a tenderness for youth which is peculiar to ourselves ——"

"It certainly isn't peculiar to mine. Peace troubles the Irish mind. Gee! It was good to have a nice fight ——"

"It will please Sam to learn that you stood up for him."

"Well, didn't he use to stand up for me?"

"He meets nothing, nowadays, except scorn and prejudice—a reasonless and sorry prejudice, by the way. He has no friends, whatever."

"I'm sorry for that. Now that we understand each other about those wages of mine, this gives me an opening to speak about something else. I've just learned about that—that Stevens girl. You see I take all of Mr. Carter's letters nowadays. I've studied the investigator's reports, too. She and her mother have been in the office several times and I made it a point to get acquainted with her. They're nothing but a pair of grafters."

"True. You know, of course, that they insisted upon marriage at first."

"Sure! The girl took to me like a kitten to milk. But I understand they're ready to settle."

"Upon the advice of their lawyer. They have a lawyer now."

"What's their price?"

"After much reluctance even to discuss a money settlement, they finally suggested one hundred thousand dollars." Eileen gasped. "I suspect they will accept less." The speaker smiled.

"Good Lord! I'd hope they would. It's the oldest graft in the world."

"To me it is new and incredibly vile."

"I suppose you think I'm pretty young to discuss such things but young girls know a lot nowadays. Mr. Lee, that girl is faking."

"You mean ——?"

"I mean about her condition."

Lee Ying looked his surprise. "I wonder —— I assumed, of course, that she was—in trouble. You may be right, but, even so, I'm at a loss how to proceed."

"I'll tell you how to proceed," Eileen volunteered. "Prove that she's faking. That's *one* thing that *can* be proved. I don't know just how to go about it but there must be a way. . . . They know how you Chinese feel about children: women don't count much with you but children count for everything, hence the 'little stranger' and the orange blossoms. Injured daughters and grafting mothers take millions a year out of the big bank accounts in this city. All a digger needs is a pair of spring heels, a dimple and five minutes alone with the head of the firm. She breaks her string of beads, hollers for a cop and begins to crochet baby socks. How they run to babies! . . . Mr. Who's Who writes a check because his daughters are in Smith or son Virgil is a Delta Kappa Oops at Harvard. . . . . There never was a pay streak as easy to mine as the Father Lode of New York. A college education is no protection to a business man: what he needs is a Yale lock."

Eileen was indignant and she ran on excitedly while Lee Ying pondered over what she said. She had given him a new idea and gradually it took

shape. When she finally rose to go he thanked her for coming and said:

"You forever put me in your debt, little Heart of Gold. Your mind works in a way which is hard for mine to follow, but there is wisdom in the funny things you say. You make me smile and you make me think. It is an accomplishment. When the gods decree that you have shed enough sunshine here, may the Celestial dragon, smoothly as a swan, bear your beloved person on high."

"Thanks! I'll enjoy a good dragon ride."

"And may lotus flowers grow from the honorable bones of your distinguished ancestors." The speaker patted her affectionately upon the arm.

"All right. But if you let these grafters get away with this, I'll come back and haunt you. Promise you won't."

"Very well, I promise."

It was a blustery day in January. Fine hard particles of snow were falling and a cold wind whirled them into drifts and spilled them into area ways. In the rooms occupied by Mona Stevens and her mother a storm was raging, too, for Everett Himes was there and he was in a highly dissatisfied mood. Negotiations with Lee Ying had dragged unaccountably, there had been numerous interviews with his lawyers, but they had led nowhere, delay had succeeded delay until the nerves of the three conspirators were worn to a ragged edge.

"I tell you there wasn't any use of keeping up the marriage bluff," Himes was insisting. "The old man banks on the boy's word and he simply wouldn't have it."

"I bet he would," Mona declared.

"Oh! You'll bet?" the man queried in irritation. "What would you bet? A hair pin?"

"Girls don't use hair pins any more."

"He knows it's a gyp as well as we do, but he doesn't want any scandal. Marriage? It's a waste of breath."

"All the same, that's where the money is," Mrs. Stevens declared. "What's fifty thousand after you cut it up and pay a lawyer?"

"I see. Fifty grand is small change." Himes curled his lip. "And me paying your rent. How times do change! Four months ago ——"

"Oh, it's nice money, of course, but it seems a pity when you think what we could have done. Gee! What alimony a jury would give a girl of Mona's looks, married to a Chinaman."

"They'd probably give her life for marrying him. I would. And remember, we haven't got the fifty, yet."

"Yes and I bet we don't get it." The discontented daughter was speaking once more.

"Betting again, are you?" Himes flared up. "What a cheer-leader you'd make. Always in black, aren't you, dearie? And what a help you've been.

God, you're a lump to carry! A ball and chain would rest me."

"Lay off of her," the mother ordered. "She went through with her part."

"Like hell she did! She never gave me a thing to work on. She let me down like a trap door. That's our whole weakness. . . . Alone with that fellow in his apartment and him looking out of the window every minute! You'd think she was selling Bibles, or had halitosis. Maybe she has. . . . A guy needs a little coöperation in any deal. Why, she could write her confessions for the magazines and they wouldn't censor a word."

"He was tough. He's a woman-hater," said Mona in a languid attempt at self-defense.

"Me, too, since I met you. . . . Of all the Janes I could have sicked onto that Chink I had to pick a—a mud turtle. Well, we get that jack to-day or we don't get it at all: I'm through and washed up. Understand? By the way, Esther," Himes looked at his watch, "it's time to vamp. Marcus will meet us there at three. And for the love of Mike leave the talking to me, will you?"

"She'll leave everything to you, except the split," Mona declared. "I'm in on that myself. While you're out I'm going to a picture and give my mind a rest."

Himes shrugged indifferently. "All right, Cheerful, but it's a waste of money. Close your eyes and you're in a trance. Come along, Big Girl."

Chinatown was in something of a turmoil when Himes and his companion arrived, for the New Year's celebration was drawing to a close. Store fronts were decorated with banners, festoons of lights were strung across the streets and lanterns spun and danced in the wind. In spite of the cold there was a festival gaiety to the place, for the pavements were carpeted with confetti, gaudy streamers whipped and writhed and many doors were sealed with red paper to keep out unwelcome spirits. Other premises were defended by lithographed warriors who brandished gigantic swords. From somewhere came a noisy crashing of cymbals, a wailing of pipes and of Chinese fiddles: there was a popping of firecrackers and the smell of burnt powder: groups of sightseers crowded about puppet shows or applauded the efforts of some boys who danced on stilts to imitate the bound feet of women. Plainly New York's Oriental citizens were doing their poor best to imitate the gaieties of the homeland.

The attorney, Marcus by name, was waiting in the tiled hallway next to the Palace of Imperial Bounty and together the three visitors were carried aloft.

Lee Ying was waiting and with him, to the surprise of the others, was his son. With his usual suavity, the father bade the newcomers welcome, and explained:

"Sam has just arrived from college to spend the New Year with me. To-night, you know, is our

Feast of Lanterns, the most important of all Chinese festivals."

"So it is," Himes agreed. It was the first time he had seen Sam and he eyed the youth curiously.

Sam, be it said, had been told nothing whatever about this meeting or its purpose, and he was as disagreeably surprised to see Mrs. Stevens as she was to see him. He turned a worried gaze to his father and opened his mouth to speak, but the latter ignored him and addressed Himes saying:

"You told me you had been to China, so you probably know that we make it a practice to settle all our accounts on the final night of the old year. It is the universal Chinese custom. Those who can pay must and those who cannot pay must expiate. The lanterns are not put out until the last debt is paid."

"Righto! It's a good custom."

"Not so good for us," Mr. Marcus declared with an affable smile. "It would ruin the law business. But what do you mean, a man who can't pay his debts must expiate?"

Lee Ying shrugged his shoulders. "Some expiate by suicide. . . . Now then, it appears there is an obligation due you——"

Unable longer to restrain himself Sam interrupted with heat, "Nonsense! The whole thing is——"

"Please!" His father did not raise his voice

but there was a command in it. "I have taken this matter into my hands."

"It's nothing but blackmail, I tell you. It's an outrage and ——"

Mrs. Stevens uttered a sound: Marcus raised his hands and broke in, "Don't let's argue. We've passed that, eh? We've come here to close this matter up one way or ——"

"Nobody is going to call me a blackmailer," the woman exclaimed. "I'm perfectly willing to take this thing to court ——"

"Esther!" Himes cautioned.

"Humph! Get an innocent girl in trouble and then ——"

"Esther!"

"Let me do the talking, please!" Marcus begged. "If I'm not your attorney, why am I here?"

"I suppose you didn't have her up in your apartment?" Mrs. Stevens blazed at Sam. "I suppose I didn't find you with her right in my own home? You didn't try to buy her off, either? Oh, no! Wait till she tells a jury what she told me."

"Will you be still?" Himes implored.

"No, I won't be still. They can keep their money: I want him to make an honest woman out of Mona. I don't care if he *is* a Chinaman. I'm willing for her to ——"

"We arrive nowhere," Lee Ying observed without feeling. "You believe your daughter, and it is natural that you should. But marriage is out of

the question. As Mr. Marcus says, we have passed all that. I have agreed, without consulting my son, to a settlement and I do not quibble. Here is a document, drawn by my attorneys, setting forth the facts and reciting the terms. Its object is to protect me from all further demands. I ask you to read it carefully." From a portfolio Lee Ying took a typewritten document and handed it to the lawyer, he removed also a sheaf of new one thousand dollar bills which he passed to Himes with the request to count them.

At sight of the latter Sam uttered a sound but his father turned upon him. For an instant they eyed each other. The young man's face whitened, a sick look spread over it, he gestured helplessly, hopelessly, and walked away. He went to a window and stared blindly out over the bleak, windswept housetops. In the roof garden, the porcelain figures were frozen in grotesque attitudes but they were no colder than he. Lee Ying believed him to be a liar! The blow stunned him.

With frowns and pursings of the lips and shakings of the head, Marcus read the document, and meanwhile with poorly assumed nonchalance Himes ran through the banknotes.

"I don't like this," the attorney announced finally. "Carter and Pelz are good lawyers but this is out of their line. It's too elaborate ——"

"The intricacies of the law bewilder me, but——"

"I can't advise my client to sign it in this form."

"I am sorry. It seems we have met for no purpose."

"Let me run over the thing." Himes took the paper; he and Mrs. Stevens scanned it.

Lee Ying waited imperturbably while the two held their heads together. Himes finally announced:

"I'm no lawyer but I say sign on the dotted line and let's end the agony." He took a fountain pen from his pocket.

"Make sure that you understand what you are signing," the importer cautioned Mrs. Stevens.

"I suppose it makes me out a grafter," she said irritably, "but I'm tired to death. It's an outrage but——" She affixed her signature; Himes and Marcus witnessed it although at the cost of another protest from the attorney.

Mrs. Stevens possessed herself of the money and rose, whereupon Lee Ying stayed her, saying:

"A moment, please. Business is over, you are now my guests and I would be lacking in politeness if I permitted you to leave my ignoble dwelling without some hospitable ceremony. New Year's is a carnival season, you must join me in some trifling refreshments." Ignoring the woman's protest, he clapped his hands and a houseboy appeared: the two exchanged words in Chinese.

Sam, whose back was to the room, started, grew rigid. Attentively he listened.

With the conclusion of the business matter, Lee

Ying wiped it from his mind: his manner changed, he became a punctilious and a gracious host. While his servants were carrying out his orders he maintained a flow of pleasant conversation about the many Chinese New Year customs, the which his visitors doubtless would have enjoyed more if they had been less impatient to leave.

Trays were brought in after a while, some loaded with fragile china and others with a lavish assortment of strange delicacies. Tea was poured, the fragrance and the flavor of which was unlike anything the Americans had ever smelled or tasted, and Lee Ying made a good deal of a ceremony over serving it. He delayed the drinking of it long enough to recite the old folk-tale dealing with the origin of the beverage. It was quite a story and he appeared to enjoy telling it. He became more genial as the moments passed.

While he was talking a telephone bell tinkled faintly in another room, and a voice answered it. The voice was strange to Sam and he strained his ears but to no effect.

Mrs. Stevens nibbled at a crumbly cake and fanned herself. The room was insufferably hot and she wanted to be gone. How silly to humor this talkative old parrot. Fifty thousand dollars! In brand-new banknotes! And Lee Ying was plainly delighted at driving such a good bargain. The old fox. Himes was a cheap skate to let him off so easily. What was fifty grand to a man like him?

The servant reappeared and exchanged a few words with his employer whereupon Lee Ying smiled and his voice altered in such a way as to focus a sudden alert attention upon him.

"I told you earlier that to-day is the last day of our year! The last day upon which we allow our debts to run. We Chinese pay in full to-day and we insist with implacable firmness upon receiving that which is our due. Madame," he turned his eyes upon Esther Stevens and they glittered queerly, "I asked you not to bring your daughter to this meeting and I had a purpose in so doing. I have detained you here——"

The object of his remark uttered a cry and rose, as if propelled by springs. Himes said something in a startled voice and he, too, rose.

"Wait! I have good news for you." The old man extended a restraining hand, but the woman exclaimed to her companions:

"Come on! I want to get out of here."

"News to gladden the heart of any mother," Lee Ying smiled. "You have been imposed upon, deceived."

"What the hell——?" Himes broke out harshly, but checked himself. Marcus had paled, he cast a startled, furtive glance about the room.

"Oh, the deceit isn't mine! It is your daughter's. She has confessed, made a clean breast of everything."

"Of what?" This came from Himes.

"Mona?" the mother queried. "Bah! What d'you mean 'confessed'?" In sudden suspicion she blazed forth: "Say! Have you pinched her? . . . Where is she? What have you done to her?"

"Wait a minute! *Wa-it—a—minute!"* Himes growled roughly. "What's this all about? What are you getting at, old timer?"

"Only this: there is no necessity for further apprehension in regard to the girl's condition. It is not at all what we—at least I—have been led to suppose it is. She admits there is no prospect of her becoming a mother."

"Bosh! That's a lot of boloney!"

"I share your evident relief," Lee Ying addressed himself mockingly to Mrs. Stevens. "I understand your agitation and your joy. Yes, and your eagerness to hear from her own lips ——"

"The dirty double-crossing little rat!" Everett Himes breathed.

"—— but the streets are crowded so I have provided an escort to take you to her. An escort for all three of ——"

"Where is she?" the mother repeated, this time almost in a scream.

In the door through which Lee Ying's house boy had come and gone a stranger, two strangers, appeared and one of them answered:

"She's over at the station house." Heedless of the dismay caused by his interruption, the speaker added as he came forward, "The inspector just rang

up to tell us she was there and everything is kay oh. And don't try to slough that roll, sister. It won't do any good for we've got the numbers and everything. . . . Yeah! The girl certainly put it over on you."

Both newcomers chuckled at the humor of this last remark.

Marcus, very white and flurried now, began an indignant protest, but the other member of the pair grinned at him and said: "Oh, give us one laugh at a time, can't you? Of course there's some mistake. There always is. And you don't know us, either. Well, we're just a couple of young policemen, trying to get ahead. We've got badges and everything. No kidding. See? . . . Yes, and you'll make it tough for us. Sure! We expect that."

"I don't understand the meaning of this outrage," stormed the lawyer.

"It simply means the girl dropped into a doctor's office this afternoon ——"

"That's a lie!" Mrs. Stevens gasped.

"Well, maybe she didn't *drop* in. Maybe she was shoved in but ——"

"My God! You can't do a thing like that," Marcus barked.

"No? Well, it's *done,* brother. Anyhow the little grifter came clean; she spilled everything and it's just like we thought. Nothing wrong with her at all. She says so herself and three doctors will

swear to it. And, by the way," the speaker turned to Mrs. Stevens, "she says she isn't your daughter. How come?"

The woman moved her lips but no sound issued.

"All right. Don't let me pry into family secrets. Now then, Mr. Lee, we'll have to take charge of that roll."

"To be sure." The importer nodded. There was a moment of silence, then one of the officers announced:

"Well, I guess that cleans it all up, eh, Joe?"

"Looks like it," the other nodded. He was still grinning.

"Then call the Royce and let's be on, as they say at the Ritz."

CHAPTER X

THE manner in which Lee Ying had handled the Stevens matter struck Sam as dramatic and effective. It was an exhibition of adroit, Oriental generalship which excited his admiration and he said so. He was surprised when his father told him quite honestly that more credit was due to Eileen Cassidy than to him inasmuch as the idea was hers and it was she who had actually obtained the truth from the Stevens girl.

Eileen! That child! Sam was amazed. He had noticed the change in her, that day at the office, but here was proof that she had indeed graduated into full womanhood. How she had obtained a confession from Mona mystified him but this he learned shortly when Eileen stopped in to report.

Miss Cassidy was amused, triumphant; the outcome of the affair was comic to her and she discussed it with a complete lack of embarrassment. Blackmail, childbirth, illicit relations, medical examinations—subjects ordinarily taboo—she treated with a frankness and a sophistication that left Sam red-faced and self-conscious. He had always affected a certain intellectual superiority over his childhood playmate but he no longer felt it. Good Heavens, this girl was a grown-up woman! Her

perfect ease indicated an honesty of thought and a modesty of mind greater than his. Well, it was probably a sign of the times.

When he voiced his appreciation of her cleverness she told him carelessly:

"Pshaw! I didn't do anything to brag about. It was merely something that took a woman's hand. I had to get solid with the girl and that was easy—grafters never give honest people credit for any brains. I took her to a few movies and—and paid for the tickets, after which we were buddies. She's a man-killer: she knocks 'em off faster than Sergeant York, to hear her tell it, so I talked about a handsome doctor I knew, the size of Tunney, who was dying to meet her. To-day I asked her if she'd like to step into the office—it was right on our way to the theater. Did she like it? She beat me up the steps. I didn't tell her he was a woman doctor." Eileen snickered maliciously.

"I had made all necessary arrangements," Lee Ying informed his son. "I had explained the matter to the police and had assumed all responsibility."

"Poor Mona! She was so slow-witted that I closed the door and walked out before the storm broke."

"It was a daring thing to do," Sam declared with a dubious shake of the head. "If you had been mistaken; if her condition had been what she claimed it was, I assume you'd have laid yourself liable to serious consequences."

"'*Serious*'? Fatal, is the word. But I knew she was faking, and something had to be done. You can't buy off blackmailers. That gang of gorillas would have borrowed a baby and bled your father for years. Gee! It made me sore. Every time I looked at Mona all I could think of was a good sock on her nose."

Lee Ying chuckled, he patted Eileen upon the shoulder, then he made her a very pretty little speech in which he expressed his gratitude and proffered her not only his and Sam's respectful affection but all their cheap, unworthy and ignoble worldly possessions. Eileen accepted the one and refused the other. The importer then confessed that he cherished no very deep grudge against Mona Stevens, who was an immature person of weak character at best, but that he did feel bitter towards the unprincipled pair who had directed her. The actions of that odious Stevens woman were particularly reprehensible in his sight and he vowed to send her and her two male companions to prison if it were possible to do so.

This determination of his, which in the days that followed he proceeded implacably to carry out, led to unfortunate and wholly unexpected results. Had he been an ordinary American business man, no doubt, he would have stormed and threatened and blown off much indignant steam, then failed to press his charges: the case would have been dropped and the defendants would have escaped without fur-

ther penalty than exposure. This was precisely what Himes and Marcus anticipated. When they found that they had counted wrongly they began a desperate fight. Their only weapon was publicity and this they used without scruple. They set a back-fire by giving a sensational story to the newspapers and they vigorously fanned the blaze.

The reputable journals made little of it, for investigation convinced them that they were being used to air a dirty mess, but unfortunately not all newspapers are reputable. One of the tabloids gave it room. In its struggle for circulation sensationalism counted for more than journalistic ethics and here it scented a story with an odor to please the nostrils of the subway crowds. Its Oriental flavor, too, lent it a zest. Chinese college boy and cute co-ed. Fifty thousand hush money. Shanghai sheik shouts blackmail. Kidnaps coming mother: medicos make examination. Latest sex sensation from Eastern University. Student body stunned by scandal. . . . Here was something which the great unwashed crowd could get its teeth into: chauffeurs and shop-girls would eat it up and stories of college immorality are sure fire. Properly exploited, with editorials on the Yellow Peril in American co-educational institutions, Oriental youths in social contact with "Our Girls," and the like, this story could be kept alive for several days.

Lee Ying was a rich and an honorable man, but with the crafty use of the customary non-committal

phrases, his wrath could be made ineffective. And after all he was only a Chinaman.

Himes saw to it that the story of Alice Hart came out, too. Her name was not used but she was described as a beautiful art student whom Sam had "befriended" at Eastern and who was now pursuing her studies in Paris at his expense.

Whatever interest all this stirred up in New York it certainly created a sensation on the campus of Sam's college. Reporters dogged him, camera men lay in wait, he was finally forced to lock himself into his rooms and deny himself to visitors.

One evening, perhaps a week after the newspaper had ceased to carry Sam's name and his picture, Lee Ying heard a stir in the hallway of his house and then a familiar voice. Sam was speaking, he was directing Moy to dispose of his luggage. With beating heart the father rose and when Sam entered he held out his arms. They embraced each other and for a moment neither spoke: then Sam announced:

"Your unworthy son has returned home. His quest of knowledge is at an end."

"Flowers of gladness spring up in my heart at your coming," Lee Ying told him, but the boy bowed his head and said wretchedly:

"Alas, that I bring disappointment to your heaven-sent old age. I have failed. I am disgraced——"

"No, no! Joy enters the door with you, my son.

It is not you who are to blame: I am the never-to-be-forgiven cause of this disaster."

"My trunks, my books, my everything are coming."

"Were you—expelled?"

Sam nodded, he lifted a face twisted with grief and shame: his father pressed him closer. "The mischief of robbers harms only the body. Tell me what happened."

"It was for—the good of the institution, they explained. They had the grace to be apologetic but —many of the university's wealthy friends and patrons were offended. The alumni resented the stain I had put upon ——"

Lee Ying interrupted with a sound. "It is incredible! You were innocent of all wrong——"

"That mattered nothing as compared with the welfare of the college, its reputation and the good will of its supporters. Colleges must live. Innocently or otherwise I brought mine into disrepute: I am the victim of an economic necessity. . . . A Chinese and a white girl. Two white girls, one a student! The very mention of such an abominable association is a scandal. Parents are threatening to withdraw their daughters as a protest against a condition which makes it possible."

"It has always existed."

"True. But these parents never dreamed that their own immaculate offsprings came into actual contact with us dissolute Orientals, or were exposed

to our contaminating touch. *Immaculate!*" Sam uttered an American oath that would have shocked Lee Ying at any other time. "They admitted that I had done no wrong, no very grievous wrong, at least. They even put the blame for the Alice Hart affair where it belonged. But a principle was involved. The races must not mix, they must not come in contact outside the lecture rooms. It is repugnant to American ideas of social decency. Men, yes: women, no. The fellows can make a friend of me but my touch defiles the girls. It didn't make any difference, either, that I stood highest in my classes. Nothing counted except the fact that I am a yellow Chinaman. The dignity, the virtue of white womanhood must be preserved, even against itself." Sam tossed his arms aloft and cursed again.

"Yes, you are Chinese. Take pride in it," Lee Ying admonished sternly. "Your ancestors were men of learning when theirs wore skins and speared frogs from the slime. We are different but not inferior."

"They're hypocrites and liars!" Sam cried. "A race of grafters and lickspittles! Even their religion is a sham. They preach about love, and brotherhood, and equality, but their words are empty: they even make a mock of their own Ten Commandments. One God! Bah! They worship two—Bigotry and Prejudice."

"Religions come and go, my son, and each serves

a purpose while it lasts. This Christianity is still new and untried and it changes with the times. Who knows how long it will endure? There is a grave in Kuifu, guarded by a crystal tree, which has wrought more of history, more of democracy, more of letters, more of human thought than any other bit of earth so small. And it is incomparably old. But do not yield to rancor, my son beloved, for venomous speech is the privilege of old age and of women. Keep your mouth clean. Your suffering grieves me but adversity is a chastener. The virtuous man must learn to find all that he wants within himself: it is the inferior man who must seek what he lacks from others. Go to your room now and we will talk about this later when both of us are calm. To-night we will feast and you shall sit at my left hand. I wish to live for a while now in the simple joy of your home-coming."

Lee Ying had eaten and drunk, he had wiped his face and his hands with a wet cloth wrung out of hot water. At the place of honor on his left sat Sam, clad like a Chinese noble. Native rites and ceremonies had governed the banquet which had run to many courses.

"I am old," the father began as a preliminary to a discussion of the matter uppermost in the minds of both. "Sometimes I think I am older than Lao-Tzu, that venerable philosopher who was eighty-one years old at his birth and who was born with an

honorable white beard. Time and patient observation have taught me that evil exists only in the hearts of men and that all other things tend to show the benevolence of Heaven towards the human race. Your feathers are short and wrongs smart you but adversity is necessary to the development of a man's virtue. To-night you are downcast and dismayed. But why? When our Yellow Emperor waged war with Yen Ti, his vanguard was composed of bears, wolves, panthers, lynxes and tigers; upon his banners were eagles, ospreys, falcons and kites. They evoked terror in the ignorant. So it is to-day: evil is nothing but a terrifying apparition, a hawk upon a painted banner. Right heart need not fear evil seeming. You lament that your quest of knowledge is over, but there are other colleges at which you can pursue your studies."

"Perhaps. . . .For what life do you wish me to prepare myself?"

Without hesitation Lee Ying answered: "For the life of a good, a self-sufficient and a virtuous man. By birth you are uncommon, you will inherit a princely fortune, an important destiny was foretold by your omens and your auguries. To fill it you must learn to walk carefully, to restrain yourself with firmness and to rule with a soft hand. Those are the three princely qualities. They can be learned in one college as well as another."

"I acknowledge no desire except to follow your wishes," Sam declared, "but the lesson you've set me

can't be learned in college. Not in an American college, at least. I lack the humility and the self-control to try—— Oh, you don't know what I've been through!" Resentment suddenly hoarsened his voice. "Unfortunately, I'm neither one thing nor the other. I'm white in thought but yellow in body; I'm a hybrid. No, it's worse than that: I'm a—leper and nobody will touch me. What consideration I receive is due entirely to your money and I'm begrudged even that. I must have some companionship but what I get I have to buy—the way a coolie buys a scrap of meat. He pays two prices and usually it is tainted."

"Nevertheless your education must go forward. Some men are blessed with a native intelligence which comes from the direct apprehension of truth. That is called intuition. They need no schooling. History calls them teachers, philosophers, messiahs: they spring from the fields and the mangers, they found new religions and new schools of thought. But such men are rare and you are not one of them. The apprehension of truth which comes from the exercise of intelligence is the result of education."

"You refer to me as a Son of the Gods, you insist that I was Heaven-sent, but I can't feel that I'm anything but lowly and therefore I walk in constant fear of disappointing you. I examine myself and I can find nothing except what I have acquired from the outside, things I have been taught. And those are 'white' things. I seem to have no herit-

age, no inborn qualities like yours. You have raised me to think proudly of myself but I cannot. If I inherited anything from the gods it is only their weaknesses. I completely lack their strength ——"

Lee Ying made a clucking sound of disapproval and surprise.

"It's true. What's more, I've leaned upon the staff of your benevolence so long that I can no longer walk alone. I'm weak and defenseless. I'm a target ——"

"How foolish!" the father exclaimed.

"Think it over. You have always protected me, carried my burdens. As a boy I was the prey of every other boy. I tried to defend myself but I didn't know how so I *bought* protection, with your money. It was the same in college. I bribed people to treat me with consideration. Who saved me from the folly of my first weakness? You. Who saved me from the results of this last affair? Not I. I come home disgraced and you honor me with a seat at your left hand and give me liberally of your courage. I grow white and tender, like a shade-grown plant. I wilt at the first exposure. . . . Exposure! That's what I need and what I crave. There's no iron in my blood and I despise myself for a weakling. What is college but a hothouse, a forcing bed? I grow spindling and my roots are thin, my sap is warm."

After a moment Lee Ying inquired: "What do you have in mind?"

"I don't know. Travel, perhaps. I can't endure any more of what I've been through."

"Very well. I had intended it to come later, but —it is an education in itself. There is the story of Tang —— Tang lived more than a thousand years ago: a very clever young man who had taken many prizes. But he resented the orders of a bold and stubborn ruler and refused to live longer in a country governed by such a foolish and unreasonable tyrant."

"You are no tyrant."

"He went on a long voyage to distant parts of the world where he saw many extraordinary sights. When he returned home he was considered the wisest man in the country and received high honors. The world shall be your college: you shall travel like a Mandarin and see it all."

The young man smiled, there was a mist in his eyes, but he shook his head gravely. "You do not wholly understand me. My indulgent father hastens to grant this wish, like every other. In his usual benevolent manner he arranges to send me in state. He makes my bed soft and tempers the winds for his son of the clouds. He sends men to fetch and carry for me. But—I must go alone and on my own feet, if I go at all. I must shoe myself and earn my bread."

Lee Ying lifted his head and opened his eyes wider. "What? . . . Is this to be a—pilgrimage? You propose to go as a mendicant?"

"Good Heavens, no! I'll earn, not beg, my way."

"What absurdity is this?"

"I merely want to be a man."

"It—would mean heat and cold and hunger and hardship ——"

"Exactly!"

"—— strife and misery. Pain! Deprivation! Discomfort! Danger!"

"I'd like to learn the meaning of such words. Am I a beanstalk or an oak?"

"Oh, my boy!" Lee Ying cried out in sudden feeling. "You have studied too hard. This fancy will pass. Swim for a while beside the shore, where my hand can reach you. You are the mother's milk of my soul and—and while the father lives the son should not wander afar. The time is not long until I shall join the higher intelligences ——" The speaker's voice died away.

Sam inclined his head. "So be it. I would be overpowered with shame if I were so insensible to gratitude as to disobey your slightest wish."

Slowly Lee Ying rose from his chair and began to pace the room. He was no longer imperturbable and serenely sure of himself but a pitiful prey to unwelcome agitations. The selfish yearnings of parenthood, its apprehensions and its dreads were at war with the impulse to indulge his son, the promptings of a lofty and a generous nature.

"A wanderer! . . . A hungry pilgrim with blistered feet! . . . Unconsidered, ignored, oppressed!

. . . It's nothing more than a yearning for adventure: the itching curiosity of youth. . . . Alas, how seldom are the jewels of this world given to those who know how to take care of them! . . . To me your idea seems utterly fantastic."

"You tell me that I must learn to walk carefully, to restrain myself with firmness and to rule others with a soft hand. How can I learn to walk carefully if my feet are heavily shod against the stones? Or restrain myself with firmness unless I am oppressed? How can I learn to rule others with a soft hand unless I first climb to a position of authority? Adversity is necessary to the development of a man's virtue but here I wear an armor that is proof against it. . . . You were so kind and so considerate as to ask my wishes. I've made them known but yours shall govern. I shall dutifully observe the ceremonies required of the filial."

"The selfish wishes of a weak and sentimental old man!" Lee Ying exploded irritably. "They defeat themselves. Always I am accursed with thoughts of myself and not of others. I fear I shall never complete my thirteen hundred virtuous tasks. . . . Tell me again what you desire so that I may accustom myself to it. I presume I shall end by yielding but I am obstinate and mean and ungenerous."

The matter was not settled that night. It was discussed frequently in the days that followed. Sam's father was artful, he did not actually oppose the projected plan, he merely revolved it deliber-

ately in his mind and delayed action, trusting that time would effect a change, defeat it somehow. But he became convinced finally that Sam was sincere. The boy was indeed hurt, embittered by injustice: he loathed Americans and he hated himself for being so weak as to let them wound him. He was restless, aimless, and he doubted the fiber of his being. Nothing would satisfy him except a test of its strength.

Reluctantly, inch by inch, the old man yielded: he acquiesced in full at last but nobody knew the cost of his surrender. Having given his consent, he offered no assistance, no advice, for such was Sam's desire.

The hour of parting came, Sam appeared before his father dressed in one of his poorest suits of clothes and with a suitcase in his hand. He carried a warm overcoat and a cloth cap: nothing more. These he set down, then he kotowed three times to the motionless figure in the thronelike chair at the other end of the room.

Lee Ying looked regal in his somber robe and cap. His Chinese shoes with their thick white soles rested upon a footstool, his hands were folded inside his sleeves. His back was straight, his grizzled head was held erect, his face was immobile.

"Come closer," he said in the language of his forefathers, and his lifeless voice was like the rustling of dry leaves.

Sam approached and made obeisance for a second

time: he did not raise his eyes, for he knew the anguish he would see and his heart bled.

"Is all in readiness?" the father inquired.

"It is. The ship sails at eleven o'clock to-night. I must report at six in order that I may be instructed in my so humble duties."

"Is it a large and a seaworthy ship?"

"It is not large but it is venerable and it has weathered many storms."

"You say it carries a cargo of cattle. Are your duties hard, my son?"

"No harder than others which my countrymen perform every day. I am to assist in the peeling of potatoes, the cleaning of dishes, the serving of food to the sailors, and such useful labors."

Disapproval flickered over the father's face. His noble son, his godling, at unworthy tasks like these. He managed to conquer his repugnance.

"The prince fares forth in disguise," he said, "but he must remember his birth. Emperors, scholars, holy men in search of humility and the higher virtues have put on coarse cloth and mingled with the lowly. It is no doubt a training for the soul. But the road is steep, it is beset with dangers and with temptations. You will not let me give you money, so I can only fill your purse with gems of wisdom mined from the meditations of the great philosophers. Preserve them, for they are priceless. . . . Remember first that the princely man knows neither grief nor fear. If on searching his heart he finds

no guilt, why should he grieve? Of what should he be afraid? It is a thought to ponder over when the night is dark and the forest is strange. And another: a man's feet trip upon molehills not mountains. You should remember, also, that when there is much to be said, say less than is necessary for misfortunes issue where disease enters—at the mouth. . . . Probably I should heed that and say no more, but I cannot. I speak in order to hold you here. . . . The world despises that man who publishes the faults of others and whose courage is unaccompanied by self-restraint."

"I shall engrave your words upon the brass tablets of my memory," Sam promised.

"Oh, there is so much to say!" A spasm convulsed the speaker's face. "Act with kindness but do not exact gratitude. Speak of men's virtues as if they were your own and of their vices as if you were liable for their punishment, for a good word has heat enough for three winters and a hard one bites like six months of cold. . . . Alas, my lips move but the words are meaningless and the advice is wasted, for who will profit by the experience of others? I am the artisan who gives you compass and square but only the gods can make you skillful in the use of them. . . . It grieves me that I cannot go with you. I would gladly peel the potatoes for that honorable crew and wash the dishes ——"

Lee Ying choked. After a moment he rose and came forward across the polished floor and now he

made no effort to conceal his emotion. Taking his son into his embrace he strained him to his heaving breast. He stood thus for a while, then in a broken voice he said:

"Go forth on your pilgrimage, I shall await your home-coming. Promise to write often—about the everyday things which I hunger to know—and promise to write with a brush for my eyes will be dim with tears. There is no feeling in the scratch of pens, only words, words. Go now, while I can still see you."

Lee Ying listened until the elevator door had closed and until he had heard the last subdued whirr of the machinery that bore Sam down into the world he wished to know. With the going of his Heaven-sent son the vigor ebbed out of the old man. Stiffly he moved to the door of his shrine and with palsied hands slid back the panel. With difficulty he lighted the joss sticks, then knelt upon the silken floor cushions. His eyes were streaming.

Sam, too, was blind as he rode down to the street level. A feeling of guilt oppressed him for he realized now how old and how lonely his father was. "The fierce ingratitude of children loved." There was a poignant meaning to those words at this moment. He wished Lee Ying had not taught him the merciless process of self-analysis, for he was vexed with questions. Was this enterprise upon which he so stubbornly persisted a mere defiant gesture prompted by resentment or was it indeed a sacred

pilgrimage to find his manhood? He was not sure. All he knew was that he must go, no matter how he hurt that gentle old man up yonder: that something stronger than mere determination, a force more potent than a sense of duty or the demands of filial piety drove him forth.

When he stepped out of the elevator he would have passed a waiting figure without noticing it if it had not stirred and if he had not heard his name spoken. He was surprised to recognize Eileen Cassidy.

It was colder than a tomb down here in this tiled entrance hall and evidently the girl had been waiting some time for she was pinched and blue. She looked smaller and younger than usual to Sam: she was like the little girl he used to know.

"Are you leaving without a good-bye to your friends?" she inquired.

"Eileen! I didn't think anybody knew I was going. I—didn't know I had any friends."

"That's a pretty mean thing to say to me."

"It is, Eileen. I didn't mean it."

"Now then, what harum-scarum idea is this, running away to see the world without a cent in your pocket? And you with everything."

"I'm not sure I can explain it. I'm tired of having 'everything,' when, as a matter of fact, I have—nothing. Nothing worth having."

"I know. You're sore and hurt. And I don't

blame you. It's enough to make you hate all of us."

"Quite enough," Sam agreed.

"But, man dear, this is an Irishman's trick. That's how my father came to America. Oh, Sam, you'd make a noble Mick, you're so fine and foolish and impractical! Is it true you're working your way across?"

"Yes. I'm an understeward, a—scullery boy."

"And how long will you be gone?"

The youth hesitated. "Until I can come back first class. Until I've seen something of the world and learned something about Sam Lee."

"It's so splendidly silly that—I wish I was going, too."

"I shan't come back until I've forgotten a good many things and a good many people, Eileen."

"Me?" Sam shook his head. "*I* won't forget *you.*"

Almost roughly the boy inquired, "Why not? I'm nothing but a 'Chink!' We don't belong in the same street. We can't even touch fingers."

As if to disprove this Eileen reached forth a cold little hand and laid it upon his. Quietly she said, "I never looked at it that way. You're a kind of a prince to me. . . . I've brought you something to take along: it'll do you no harm and it may do you some good." She unbuttoned her coat, a flimsy inadequate coat for such weather, she ran her icy fingers into the neck of her dress and drew forth

a scapular. It was warm from the heat of her bosom as she put it in his hand. "I don't know if my religion is any better than yours and Lee Ying's but it won't harm to mix them. He'll be praying for you and so will I. Between the two of us you'll get some good. And if you're ever down and out there's a twenty dollar gold piece sewed inside. It's the first money I ever made."

Sam stared at the speaker queerly, there was a lump in his throat as hard as the gold piece he held between his fingers. He mumbled his thanks and stooped to kiss Eileen's hand but she lifted her face to his. She put her arms around his neck and kissed him full upon the lips.

"Good-bye, Brian Boru," she whispered. "Come back as clean as you go."

It was a virginal kiss, the first girl's kiss that Sam Lee had ever felt. His head was whirling when he bowed it to the wind and strode off towards the elevated station. A father's benediction, and a girl's kiss! A Catholic scapular upon a Chinese breast! What harm could come to him?

CHAPTER XI

SAM was too Chinese to ignore his promise to write home frequently but if he had realized how eagerly his letters were received he would have written even oftener than he did. This, however, would have argued a certain feeling of self-importance on his part and he was anything but conceited. Had it been otherwise he never would have sailed away on that "honorable cattle ship."

Sam often wished that he was as thick-skinned as his father. Lee Ying was a modest man and humbly aware of his too-numerous insufficiencies, nevertheless he possessed a placid self-esteem which was proof against such slights as had been put upon his son. He was enormously proud of his race and he considered himself by birth, by training and by accomplishment immeasurably superior to most of the white people he knew and inferior to none. He had reason for this belief in himself. Contact with the West and with Westerners had not broken his shell: his yolk was yellow, therefore the ignorance, the bigotry and the prejudices of his white neighbors were more amusing than offensive to him.

Sam would have given much to acquire a similar frame of mind but he found it impossible to do so.

During the first smart of resentment at his dismissal from Eastern he had thought seriously of going to China, of pulling up stakes and going to live in the land of his fathers and there becoming what nature had intended him to be, an out-and-out Oriental. He told himself that it would be difficult but not impossible. Hot oil can be forced into the hardest, the driest, the most refractory wood until it becomes soft and pliable: no doubt he could be made to bend and to fit himself into his native pattern. But further contemplation of the idea appalled him: he sensed more abnormalities in things Chinese than in things American and so he set his face towards Europe where there is an "easy grace" with foreigners whatever the color of their skins. There, if anywhere, he assured himself, a yellow man with a white mind could hold up his head and live unashamed and unhumiliated.

His doubts about his manly fiber were soon resolved, for experiences came swiftly on shipboard and he rose to meet them in a way that quite surprised himself. To begin with, nobody dreamed that he was Chinese, and that was a relief; he was merely a greasy member of the greasy crew of a greasy tramp. For that matter, his companions had little or no race prejudice: they were footless fellows, most of them were failures, and prejudice of any sort is rare among the lowly. Among these casuals Sam made both friends and enemies. Acquaintance with them did much to awaken an agree-

able feeling of self-confidence and superiority which was doubly pleasant by reason of its novelty.

He learned the value of obedience, the pains and the rewards of labor, the necessity of self-reliance. He learned how to snatch his food like a prowling cat and how to fight for the slender privileges that were accorded him. He became accustomed to the nauseating odors of filth and to the smell of clean salt air. He was his own master, for the first time, and as good as the next man. Yes, better! Something stirred inside of him and he laughed a good deal. It was great.

He left the ship in Liverpool and in the seclusion of a cheap bedroom in a dingy quarter he wrote to Lee Ying. He used a brush, which he wielded skillfully and this, too, amused him, for Chinese ideographs were unwieldly things with which to recount experiences like his; the stately, ornate language of the flowery East was poorly fitted to describe the sordid doings of a pot-rustler on a cattle ship. The more he tried, the more entertainment he got out of it: he could see the smile on his venerable father's lips when he read the letter.

One day when Eileen Cassidy dropped in to inquire for news of the wanderer, Lee Ying told her, "He is well and happy. The Celestial powers conveyed his ship safely through the storms and I am glad. I made sure that they would do so, for I paid them well."

"Who? The gods?"

The old man nodded. "If disaster had overtaken him I would have beaten them soundly."

"Attaboy!" Eileen exclaimed. "That's one way to get your wish: pray rough. But what does he say?"

"Frankly I'm both mystified and astonished at what he writes. He has completely changed. I let him go on this masquerade as a father allows his son to go out on the street at festival time—to peep at life. He seems to have thrown his mask aside and joined the revelers. . . . I gave him much good advice, I urged him to walk with dignity but, if you will believe me, he bids fair to become a common roisterer. Let me read you——" The speaker took from his sleeve a packet of thin rice paper which Eileen regarded with sudden interest.

"Oh, Gee! It's in Chinese!" she exclaimed. "Say! He's a smart kid, isn't he?"

"Mind you, I have admonished him more than once that the higher type of man is firm but not quarrelsome. Listen!" With eyes that shone queerly Lee Ying turned several pages then read from the vertical rows of hen tracks:

" 'It is an indubitable proof of divine mercy that a man more frequently inherits from his ancestors their noblest characteristics and most-greatly admired qualities of moral virtue rather than their reprehensible vices and soon-to-be-forgotten passions, it being a natural law that strength survives weakness. In me, alas, I fear that the opposite is

true, for degraded instincts are constantly at war with my better nature. Violent impulses present themselves to me in misleading and symmetrical shapes. Doubtless this is the work of malicious spirits who employ themselves in this discreditable manner.' "

"Is that Sam writing?" Eileen broken in.

"I translate his words as nearly as possible into the awkward medium of your language. He continues, 'This person is convinced of the truth that a man who strikes with a sharp point will not himself be safe for long, nevertheless he is accursed with an appetite for undertakings in which no refined individual would take intelligent pleasure. Already he has engaged in two disgraceful combats of a nature which reflects no credit upon his self-restraint, albeit his reputation has not suffered thereby. For a time he endured patiently the offensive overbearing of a low-born kitchen person of abandoned manner and inelegant habits whose chief delight lay in effecting the discomfort of others. On a certain day of propitious circumstances, your son was engaged in exalted contemplation of the sublime virtues when this rapacious person endeavored by force to despoil him of his alleged-to-be-softer-than-others mattress. Returning from the middle air and mindful of the fact that he who moves not from his proper place is long lasting, the writer rose and, without affording his opponent an opportunity to arrange his charms and talismans to better advan-

tage, smote him with a boot. He fell at one blow under the impression that he had encountered a class of circumstances differing radically from anything he had sought.

" 'A certain renown accrued to your unworthy son as a result of this regrettable encounter and to this day a diligent search has failed to reveal in him the slightest feeling of remorse at the occurrence.' "

"The rowdy!" Eileen cried in delight. "What's his other fight?"

Lee Ying read on, smiling: " 'On another occasion, he grew resentful of the unmelodious singing of a large grease-individual from the engine room whose coarser-than-shark-skin voice and ribald verses interrupted his placid meditations. Tearing himself from his enchanting contemplations, your son addressed that person of no particular attainments likening him to a turtle and consigning him to various objectionable tortures of a vile and humiliating nature. Some time was agreeably spent by each in uttering remarks concerning the habits, the appearance and the accomplishments of the other and meanwhile the warlike spirits of our departed ancestors entered into and took complete possession of their least important descendant. They urged him with irresistible arguments to assail their defamer with a blunt instrument and this he did. Who could dissent to such counsel? There ensued an interminable conflict in which even a longer space of time was spent in determining whose di-

recting spirits were the most powerful. A considerable rivalry sprang up among the onlookers who vied with each other in seeing who would be the last to interfere.

"'This person was at a disadvantage in regard to strength and stature but he called to his assistance the cunning and the valor of his most distinguished ancestors. Those benevolent influences graciously responded, imbuing him with feelings of a savage and yet agreeable order and conferring upon him a versatile dexterity which he had not conjectured to be his. Likewise they rendered their ignoble descendant wholly oblivious to pain and enabled him without any considerable feelings of inconvenience to endure acute discomforts not the least of which resulted from the long continued presence of his enemy's thumb in his eye socket. This he put an end to in course of time by smiting that degraded person about the middle with blows that caused his liver to dissolve. It was only by reason of interference of a determined nature that the valiant spirits of these departed warriors were frustrated in the high-minded intention of kicking their defamer in the face and thus terminating the affair in a manner wholly satisfactory to their honor.

"'Already the enviable black eye of the writer is beginning to open to the light as the shy petals of a morning glory unfold to the dawn. Alas, in another week it will have practically disappeared.'"

"He's proud of his first 'shiner'!" Eileen exclaimed. "He's learning to fight and he loves it."

Lee Ying nodded. "So it appears. Those ancestors of whom he speaks with such unbecoming levity were fighters of renown. They went into battle with fans in their hands and yet they proved themselves to be invincible men at arms. I cannot find it in my heart to chide him."

"*Chide* him? Give the boy a big hand. All he needs is to win a few scraps. Glory be! I called him Brian Boru and he took it in earnest."

Lee Ying was in the habit of smiling frequently but it was not often that he laughed aloud: now his shoulders shook and he gave voice to his pride and his amusement. "A high spirit is an indication of moral strength, but the boy does wrong to attribute his own depravity to the beneficent powers who guard him." Still chuckling, he read other passages from Sam's letter until Eileen asked:

"Where is he going from Liverpool? What does he propose to do, and who does he intend to lick next?"

"His wants are few and he believes that his gift of tongues will afford him a living. He speaks of London, Paris, Berlin ——"

"Paris! He *would!* That—girl is in Paris." The father shrugged, whereupon Eileen exclaimed, "So, *that's* where he's heading for! Gee, I'm stupid! If I knew how to wait I'd be a dumb waiter."

"He'll never marry a European woman."

"Ohio isn't in Europe. It's a frontier state."

"Have no fear, Sam is Chinese. As yet he doesn't understand all that means, but he will learn."

"You mean no—white girl would marry him? . . . Bosh! He doesn't look Chinese."

"Celestial beings assume a variety of pleasing forms. He is a Son of the Gods ——"

"I think that's terrible!" Eileen interrupted. "You're a nice man, Mr. Lee, and I like you, but I wish you'd have a talk with Father Deneen about religion. It would do you a lot of good, for he has the clearest way of explaining things. Sam is a dandy fellow but it's sacrilegious to talk about him the way you do. It'll bring him no luck, either. . . . Say! I bet you don't know that he wears a scapular."

"A—what?"

"I gave him mine. And I sewed a twenty dollar gold piece in it."

"So? . . . It may prove to be an efficacious charm."

"Charm!" The girl was scandalized. "That's wicked. Goodness! What a stubborn old heathen you are." The importer nodded his placid agreement to this charge. "What I'm trying to say is this, if Sam doesn't marry a white girl, who will he marry? There aren't a dozen Chinese girls ——"

"Heaven sent him, it will provide him a suitable mate." After an instant the speaker went on, "You

call me a pagan, but I am more Christian, more Catholic, than you are, in one sense of the word. At any rate, my views are broader. I hold that it matters little what beliefs people profess provided they themselves are sound and worthy. The rivers of righteousness rise in the Lake of Heaven and however deep the forest or however rough its course each wandering stream finds at last the tranquil sea. Neither an incorruptible man nor his creed will seriously harm himself or others. Your civilization is still too young to have arrived at that philosophy but I believe Christ taught it. So much for religion. The mingling of bloods is another matter, altogether; it involves purely physical problems and one must be practical as well as philosophical. The consequences of an interracial union—I don't mean international—are not evident until the second generation. Then they assume tremendous proportions and vexatious aspects. We Chinese worship the family, we revere our children as devoutly as our parents: extreme antiquity has taught us the wisdom of doing so. . . . Sam is an extraordinary person, he will succeed to a large fortune and to a position of much influence. He cannot be the father of half-breeds; the purity of his strain cannot be diluted. All that is sacred in the temple of my soul revolts against the thought. My pride and something stronger—Chinese pride, which is older and loftier than the pyramids—forbids it."

"Hm-m! I never thought about *your* pride. All

the same, if he falls in love with a white girl, I bet he'll forget everything."

"He could show no baser ingratitude. And ingratitude is a trait unknown to our people." The speaker suddenly changed his tone and apologized. "But I grow boastful. Of what interest are my humble descendants to the Daughter of Irish Kings? Tell me something about yourself and your honorable family, little Fragrance of Spice."

Eileen passed off the request with a careless answer but Lee Ying was insistent so she told him what there was to tell about the Cassidys and the Dalys, her mother's people. She certainly had no reverence either for the departed or for the living members of those clans, most of whom, she asserted, had left Ireland for good reason. So far as she knew they were more notable for the size of their families than for the size of their accomplishments. "I've got more relatives than a house fly," she confessed, "and they're all poor. If there's any luck in our branch of the family, it's all bad."

Every week or so thereafter Eileen either telephoned to Lee Ying or dropped in to inquire for news of Sam and in spite of her contention that the importer was a hopeless old heathen whose beliefs were a scandal to all right-thinking people, they nevertheless became quite cronies.

Sam went on to London as soon as his honorable black eye had grown well, and there he encountered adventures and vicissitudes as interesting to him as

to his heart-hungry father and his little Irish friend. At any rate, he made them interesting in the telling, for he wrote very well and his new independence was expanding him in a miraculous manner: it was giving him an amused and an amusing outlook upon life as unexpected as it was un-Chinese. He was no longer the serious-minded, bulbous-browed student Eileen had known.

He secured some fitful employment among the Oriental importing houses as an interpreter. He tried and failed at several jobs which he should not have undertaken and he was cheerful about his failures. Then in a certain letter came news that startled the pair at home. He was in southern France: he had become a sort of assistant to a successful English playwright and was by way of becoming a man of letters. His salary was small but he was living like a nabob in a charming villa overlooking the Mediterranean: there were servants to do his bidding and he had made a friend. The how and the why of this amazing change in his fortune he set down with much appreciation.

One night in London he had witnessed, from a high-perched, low-priced seat, the reigning melodramatic success of the season. It was a lurid play of the Orient and in it were several Chinese characters played by English actors. Sam had quickly discovered that the author knew no more about Chinese customs and the Chinese language than did the actors who played his Oriental rôles, and acting

upon impulse he had gone around to the stage door when the play was over. Mr. Cyril Bathurst, the dramatist, had happened to be in the theater that night and he had turned out to be a most agreeable and approachable gentleman. He had listened to Sam and had readily confessed to an abysmal ignorance of everything Chinese, an ignorance which embarrassed him the more because the success of this play had involved him in an undertaking to write another with the same background. He was writing it now and he was both worried and discouraged by his limitations. He was swamped in research work, the which he detested, and he was half tempted to throw up the job. If Sam knew anything about China, his appearance was in answer to prayer.

Mr. Bathurst had invited his self-appointed critic to go to supper with him and to talk about China, and Sam had gone. On the following afternoon the author had borne him off to his country home and there they had spent the week-end.

It had been a great lark for Sam. Bathurst had proved to be a splendid fellow, an Oxford man, a sportsman, a tennis player: he and his guest had hit it off immediately. They had played tennis and, due as much perhaps to Sam's skill with the racket as to his knowledge of things Chinese, Mr. Bathurst had made him a sporting proposition to remain with him during the writing of the new play as a—well, as a salaried guest, an unofficial literary assistant,

a tennis partner, or what have you? Naturally, the young man had jumped at the chance.

They were on the Riviera now, the play was growing and Sam's back-hand was improving. Spring in Southern France is lovely, flowers were in bloom and the sea was incredibly blue. There was much social life at Paradis, where they were stopping: Mr. Bathurst went out a great deal and entertained considerably. Sam was meeting some nice people, both English and American. It was a diverting experience. The gods were grinning.

Lee Ying and Eileen discussed the letter at length, and another matter, too. All the luck, it appeared, was not Sam's, and Eileen's good-natured contempt for her "ancestors" had been succeeded by a wholly new respect. The strangest thing had happened. Her mother had come into an inheritance! It was an astounding fact. It was just like a story in a book, and the Cassidy home was in turmoil. One of those footless relatives she had told Lee Ying about, a cousin of her mother's by the name of Malachy Daly, had considerately died and bequeathed Mrs. Cassidy fifty thousand dollars. Or, to be exact, the interest on that amount. News of this legacy had come through a San Francisco bank and it had nearly finished the good woman. She had promptly suffered another heart spell, but she was better now although still dazed.

"The interest is paid to her every month—that's so Dad and Jim can't spend it—and upon her death

the principal goes to me. *Me!"* Eileen was round-eyed, breathless. "Dad and Jim declare it's a gag of some kind because none of Ma's family ever laid up a cent. Maybe it is, but the first check has come. And the funny part is Ma can't remember that she ever did a thing for her cousin Malachy."

"The truly benevolent do not remember their acts of kindness."

"Of course, she never had much to do with. But —I do hope for her sake there's no mistake about it."

"I'm sure there is none. As for the forgotten obligation of her departed relative, time brings to the truly righteous man a sense of gratitude for the favors he has received. No doubt your mother's venerable cousin was a man of lofty motives ——"

"He didn't have that reputation."

"—— and could not pass on high with a debt outstanding against him."

"Well!" The girl drew a deep breath. "I don't know a thing about him for I never saw him, but I'll say he passed 'on high' when he *did* pass. He was hitting on all six, with the muffler open."

CHAPTER XII

"How true it is that destiny is unavoidable," Sam wrote in one letter. "He who is marked for honors will be elevated even though he dwells in the heart of a solitude, and that man who is marked for drowning will meet his fate even if he builds a house in the branches of a tree. Portents at birth and the position of certain celestial bodies of good and evil effect are, no doubt, responsible for this. Contradictory and opposite-pulling planets appear to have been in the skies at my coming for in spite of occasional misfortunes, on the whole a singularly amiable influence controls me. Which will prove the stronger can be determined only by the lapse of time or by a careful examination of the lives of my renowned ancestors, some of whom may have been affected by the discreditable actions of malevolent demons, or the dignified jests of lesser and more facetious spirits."

Sam smiled as he wrote these words down, for he did not honestly subscribe to such beliefs, nevertheless it pleased him to adopt the Chinese spirit as well as the old Chinese form when he took up his brush and rice paper to write home. He felt sure that Lee Ying would sense a restrained humor in his use of this archaic form, especially in telling of

his very modern thoughts and actions, so he purposely let himself go.

"It would ill-become an illiterate person of my vapid understanding to examine into matters so obscure, nor would it strengthen his impoverished intellect so to exert himself, but a refined amusement comes to him at the contemplation of his present circumstances.

"It is said that a worthless garment is better protection than an army of lances. Who could question it in the light of my experience? It was my resigned intention upon leaving the shelter of your august roof to forego not only your innumerable favors but also the titles and honors borne by our respected family and to become as one insufferably poor. It was my commendable desire to eat of rinds and to sleep on dried rushes in order that a humble appreciation of my feeble attainments and unendurable deficiencies of resource would be made apparent and that I would acquire a becoming contentment with my predestined no-worth.

"Strange to say, discomfort flees from me, the rinds turn by agreeable magic into the richest foods and in groping through ashes for heat I uncover precious stones. No malignant evils pursue me and no Mandarin could travel in easier state than I. My time is agreeably spent in visiting celebrated places and in refined conversation with persons of high rank whose manners and accomplishments are infinitely superior to mine: I sleep upon a mountain

of softest down: my garments are of splendid quality and I engage in languid and luxurious amusements. Furthermore, the dignity and respect which attend those engaged in the distinguished arts is mine, by virtue of my association with a notable patron.

"Is it not strange that one who sets out patiently to endure a penance and to take upon his head the buffets of a remorseless fate should have thrust upon him all of the gratifying honors due one of royal lineage and that he should be accredited with accomplishments in which he is disagreeably imperfect? In the case of your son his desire to earn merit through self-inflicted degradation is pleasantly balked, he builds a hut of leaves and it becomes a pagoda with lacquered walls, his fingers acquire the touch of gold and such melancholy thoughts as he summons, at great effort, flee like sparrows. These phenomena prove the truth of that saying earlier quoted, nevertheless they provoke in this person strong feelings of derisory amusement. Unfortunately he is too mean in spirit to exert himself energetically in developing his original plan and doubtless he will return home of no higher spiritual stature than when he left and with his moral fiber in its customary state of offensive decay.

"There is gratification in the knowledge that one's charms and omens are more potent than those possessed by others and good fortune for this undeserving person is wrapped up in one which he dis-

poses to advantage about his neck. It contains a gold piece and it is a money charm as well as a luck charm of irreproachable merit, as witness what follows:

"This place is frequented by rich people who devote themselves entirely to refined pastimes of an expensive character and to the elegant observances practiced among the idle class. Chief of these observances is gaming for enormous sums, and accommodation therefor is provided in a splendid building of shining white marble. Entertainment of several sorts is provided therein, including feasting and dancing to harmonious music more pleasant than the beating of many gongs.

"Your worthless and impoverished offspring did not presume to demean this noble edifice with his presence lest he be tempted to engage himself in gambling which he could ill afford to do. But on an occasion when his patron had entertained with notable extravagance certain of his friends, it was suggested that all visit the temple of avarice. Social dictates forbade this writer from excusing himself although he experienced a pronounced feeling of no-enthusiasm for the project.

"It is well known that a sufficiency of charms about the head and a suitable arrangement of sacred written sentences will enable one to be closeted with demons and yet suffer no ill effects. Virtues of surprising potency evidently reside in that talisman before described, for its wearer prospered to an

extraordinary and pleasing extent. So powerful was its effect that your son swiftly obtained a renown among those present far exceeding the honors due him as an intellectual person engaged in the composition of inspired theatrical dialogues. It even provoked a display of inelegant resentment among those rapacious persons who operated the place, but to the latter he was in a measure oblivious.

"Certain of the more avaricious patrons who plainly had neglected the higher virtues in a pursuit of wealth, kotowed to the ignoble bearer of your name, in a manner both servile and offensive. They urged him to touch their money in order that he might thus convey to it some potency it otherwise lacked, and they begged permission to lay their hands upon his back and derive some imaginary virtue from contact with its alleged deformity.

"These requests, with one exception, he ignored. He did permit a maiden of elegant personality, whose lucky charms had proven utterly inadequate to protect her, to lay a hand, lighter than a fern, upon his spine and obtain therefrom whatever delicate benefit she could.

"It so chanced that he encountered her at the tennis club on the following afternoon and in recognition of their earlier meeting she engaged herself in pleasant and inspiring talk with him. Many estimable compliments were exchanged and only by a painful effort of will did this presumptuous per-

son finally tear himself away from that enchanting conversation.

"A beneficent fate, aided somewhat by the ingenuity and effrontery of the writer, contrived numerous meetings thereafter, indisputably proving the prepotency of that charm aforementioned. No person of his insignificance has ever been the recipient of her distinguished liking for she is of haughty lineage and studiously ignores the poor and the low-born, thus reflecting honor upon her house. Her name is Wagner and her honorable father acquired such wealth and standing through the manufacture of soaps and cleansing powders that she moves exclusively in the most-hard-to-enter circles. It pleases her parent to display towards this undeserving person indications of polished approbation and to assume an artificial interest in his commonplace remarks.

"Upon the conclusion of this intolerably tiresome letter the writer will dress himself becomingly and meet Miss Wagner at the tennis courts. She is an unskilled but an impetuous player of extraordinary grace and one derives keen spiritual satisfaction in observing her for she is not unlike that Empress whose feet were so symmetrical and whose beauty was so divine that a flower sprang up wherever she trod.

"Among the sublime virtues is an intelligent submission to the inevitable. How can this contempti-

ble writer quarrel with a fate so kind, however mocking it may appear?"

Sam finished his letter with suitable expressions of his affectionate regard, laid aside his writing materials and then changed into his flannels. He was not nearly so resentful at his condition as he had pretended to be, for following his meeting with the impetuous Miss Wagner life had suddenly taken on a new and profound interest.

Yes, he walked in pleasant places, he was liked and respected, Mr. Bathurst treated him not as an employee but as a friend and a companion. Their work was anything but trying, for the playwright wrote only in the mornings and the rest of his time he devoted to the amusements in which bachelors of means and of social standing indulge themselves. Many of these he shared with Sam. Bathurst was a good-natured giant and although his profession had brought him large rewards its honors rested lightly upon him, he regarded it as a not very dignified occupation for an able-bodied man and he professed no faith whatever in his so-called talents.

He had taken an instant liking to Sam and when Cyril Bathurst liked a person he made a good deal of him. The truth is Sam interested the dramatist: a Chinese boy of high attainments with all the outward attributes of an Occidental was a phenomenon which afforded opportunity for study and for speculation. It was something new. Bathurst was not slow to realize that the boy had a "white mind" and

that in all but one respect he was an American: here then was an anomaly, a "situation," which could not fail to intrigue any thoughtful man. Bathurst wrote melodramas for intelligent audiences but a polite drama in real life was going on right in his own house and he wondered if there might not be a stage play in it. Race prejudice. Religion. Social barriers. Biological variations. Inherited instincts and revulsions that ran back into the core of two opposing civilizations. Bathurst, himself, gave little importance to such things, for he was a cosmopolitan and he had no racial prejudice to speak of, but he realized that he was an exception and that other people regarded them very differently. With such materials, a skillful and sympathetic writer could build a play of deeper significance than any he had put his hand to and while he regretted the fact that his friendship for Sam precluded the use of them, he nevertheless was fascinated by their dramatic possibilities. He was the more interested when he learned that women, white women, liked Sam and that Sam liked them. The Wagner girl, for instance, was having quite an affair with his protégé and what the outcome would be Bathurst had not the faintest idea.

As for the young man, himself, he neither concealed nor advertised the fact that he was of Oriental parentage, this being in keeping with his dignified reserve. Having been entirely frank with his benefactor he assumed that the latter was equally

frank with their mutual acquaintances, and inasmuch as the question was seldom referred to in his presence, even indirectly, he attributed his improved status to that wider tolerance, that easier grace he had expected to find among cultured Europeans. In this assumption he was not altogether warranted: Bathurst did tell some of his friends, to be sure, but others he did not tell. Any comment the truth may have excited never reached Sam's ears, he never noticed any coolness on the part of his new acquaintances and he found himself happier than he had ever been. He won for himself a considerable popularity which was gratifying, but not really surprising, for his manners were perfect, he was an asset to any dinner table and people took to him readily. As a matter of fact, several young married women seemed quite willing to make something more than a good friend out of Sam, but he conducted himself with admirable restraint and was all the better liked for it.

As for the Wagner girl, Cyril Bathurst had never cared for her: she was too sophisticated and too sure of herself. She was too modern and too highly Americanized to meet the approval of a conservative Britisher like him.

The principal guests at the most expensive hotel in Paradis were Albert Wagner and his daughter. Wherever the Wagners went, they were the principal guests, or at least they spent more money than

anybody else, for the father traveled in style and he provided for himself in an elaborate way. He was not offensively ostentatious but he enjoyed luxury, he was inordinately proud of his daughter and it gratified him to show her off to the best possible advantage. It pleased him to show off all of his possessions, as a matter of fact, and with some reason, too, for they were of the finest. Alanna, for instance, was a beauty. Mr. Wagner's business was enormously prosperous and its organization was a model of efficiency; he indulged himself in numerous hobbies, and his California estate was famous for its size and its appointments. The house, itself, he had filled with treasures, in his garage were nothing but high-priced cars and in his stables were only the finest of blooded stock. Al Wagner, in short, was prodigiously successful and he lived up to it.

There were times when Alanna overpowered him a bit, much as did his magnificent residence, for he understood her as imperfectly as he appreciated his paintings and his statuary, and he managed her no more skillfully than he managed his thoroughbreds when he undertook to ride or to drive them. At the conclusion of the famous Wagner divorce the court had given him custody of the girl but it had failed utterly to put him in control of her and he was too indulgent, too fond of her to assert himself beyond a certain point. Having proven that a business can be made to grow and to succeed by the

employment of high-priced executives he had applied the same common-sense principle, as he called it, to the rearing of his daughter—a not unusual practice among modern parents who can afford the expense. In justice to both it may be said that the procedure had worked out pretty well and that neither had any serious fault to find with it. On the whole, both father and daughter were perfectly satisfied with themselves and almost as thoroughly satisfied with each other.

Alanna was well educated, well poised, well groomed and well spoiled. She was twenty years old and she had been engaged four times—first to a broad-shouldered, shell-shocked chauffeur, and lately to an East Indian prince whom she had met in London. Her two intervening heart affairs had not received so much advertising as the others, both fiancés having been nice, ordinary fellows, mere mill-run products of her set who danced well. She still numbered them among her intimate friends and suffered no embarrassment at meeting them. She had just turned seventeen when that chauffeur came to work for her father and she had defied Al Wagner with much spirit. The story had been played up in the local newspapers but she laughed now at memory of it.

Her engagement to the prince she had never taken very seriously—he was altogether too dark-skinned—but it had been an interesting escapade, it had provoked much amusing social chatter and had

resulted in innumerable rotogravure pictures. In terminating it of her own accord and without unpleasant consequences she had fortified her father in the comfortable conviction that she had inherited his common sense and could pretty well take care of herself in any situation. This, by the way, was one of the few beliefs they shared in common.

This afternoon, Mr. Wagner looked up from his newspaper as Alanna came through the high-ceilinged Louis XIV drawing room of their suite on her way to their private "lift." She was wearing an effective sport outfit which he had never seen and he stopped her to admire it.

"I like that get-up," he told her. "You look like a million dollars. Where are you going?"

"Over to the Casino."

"Meeting that Lee fellow again?"

The daughter nodded. Spying her reflection in one of the mirrors she approached it and appraised herself critically.

"It seems to me he's giving you quite a rush," Wagner ventured.

Still posturing before the glass, Alanna shook her head in negation. "I'm rushing him," she declared.

"So? That's out of the ordinary. What ails him?"

"I wish I knew. I'm beginning to think there's something wrong with me. I seem to look all right but—he's an iron man."

"Say! Who is he?"

The girl lifted her brows. She turned a blank, interrogatory gaze upon her father. "Who—*is he?*"

"Yes. What do you know about him?"

"Oh! Nothing. . . . All I know is he—affects me. I've been waiting to meet him ever since I was three years old."

"Really?" With a frown Wagner laid aside his newspaper. "Is this the dawn of another of your famous infatuations or—?"

"Why yes: I presume it is. He's a ripping tennis player, and a pretty good golfer. He swims well and he dances —— Oh, *how*—that—man—can—*dance!*" The speaker lifted her eyes heavenward, a sensation of languorous delight seemed to flow through her supple body. She shivered ecstatically. "Magnetism! Charm! It! He has—everything."

"Hm-m! Foreigner, isn't he?"

"Born in San Francisco: lives in New York."

"Lee! . . . I don't place the name. And I can't make him out, either: he talks like an Englishman or something. But—who is he and what is he? . . . Has he got any money?"

Alanna raised her brows in mock concern. "I—I never thought to ask him, darling, but I will. I'll do that, right away, and let you know." Then her expression changed and she inquired, "If he interests me, what difference would that make?"

"Oh, I know ——"

"You saw him win two hundred thousand francs that night I met him ——"

"Yes, and I've seen him win half a dozen times since. He behaves himself like a professional gambler."

"He's living with Cyril Bathurst. They're writing a play together."

"That doesn't sound prosperous. And meanwhile he's making a play at *you,* eh?"

"No, damn it!" Alanna exploded.

"Now, see here," her father began protestingly but she interrupted him.

"Say, Reverend, are you off on another hallelujah? Why all the sudden interest in me and my boy friend?"

"Because I won't have my daughter running around with every Tom, Dick and Harry. If he's a somebody, and if he likes you, that's one thing: if he's merely after your money——"

"I dare say those show girls in London liked *you.* Those Tommies, and Dicky Birds and Harriets weren't after *your* money, were they? Don't button your collar in the back, darling."

"I'm not preaching."

"Then don't shake any chains. I hate wardens."

"Good Lord!" Wagner complained. "To think I got the custody of you and Junior went with Anna. I could have handled *him.*"

After a moment of thought Alanna said without

the slightest heat: "Let's understand each other, Albert dear. Surely you don't think a girl should consult her father about her intimate personal affairs? That's an exploded doctrine: I'm free, white and sunburned. I'm not in the least fussy about what you do, for you're still young enough to look after yourself. I hope it will be a long while, sweetheart, before you become a burden on me. As for Sam, I get a great kick out of him. So that's that."

"How, may I ask? Is he—fresh?"

Alanna widened her eyes. "What a quaint idea. It ill becomes a man of your importance to use antiquated slang. No—he's anything but 'fresh', if you refer to petting, and flasking and cab-conduct. He wears boxing gloves and I doubt if he knows what a neck is for. That's what ails me, dear. Frustration. Suppression. Hushed hunger."

The father's face reddened, angrily he cried: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The flippant way you girls talk about sex is disgraceful. It's getting so a man can't find genuine modesty and refinement in his own home."

"And therefore he steps out! That accounts for mother's whacking alimony. Pardon the rattle of the old family skeleton. . . . A little sex consciousness doesn't hurt a girl if she knows how to say 'when'. But——" Alanna tapped her father affectionately upon his nose, "you're too old to understand such things. Honestly, it's embarrassing for

a daughter to initiate her father into the secrets of life. I don't see how some girls do it."

"Do all you kids look on older people as—as dodos?" Wagner demanded.

"Why, no. You're merely crude and unsophisticated. You're still in low gear and—well, we try to be patient. If there's anything you feel you must know, Albert, just ask me, but please don't bother your head about matters no father should be told."

"Um-m! I hope you won't consider me low-minded and vulgar. I assure you it's more than mere senile curiosity that prompts me to inquire if you permit this new sheik to paw you and kiss you and all that?"

"Sarcasm, eh? You *are* a trial, precious. No, he hasn't kissed me, yet. But he will. After that, I'll be able to tell you a lot more about him and about myself. I'll see myself in a fierce, revealing light and probably I'll begin to wonder who he is and what he is and whether he has money or merely personal appeal. There's plenty of time to be practical. I'm twenty, Governor—that's forty by the old Roman calendar—and what good are expensive negligées if nobody sees them except a maid?"

"Damned if I don't believe you're in earnest about this fellow!" Wagner exclaimed. "I'm going to look him up."

"Please don't! You might discover something

that would make you unhappy. It's really my affair."

"He may be some common crook or ——"

"He may be, indeed."

"—— or a miserable fortune hunter."

"How dreadful!" Alanna mocked. "But what of it? A girl can spend only so much money on herself. Now, please mind your own business, sweetheart. I mean that in the kindest way, honestly. You know I can endure anything except interference." She kissed her father on his bald head and left the room.

CHAPTER XIII

EVER since Sam Lee's childhood he had received, on the eve of the New Year, money for gambling. Having gambled all his life, he looked upon it more as an occupation than an amusement. He had been raised in the Chinese belief that luck is a state of being, a posture, to be attained by proper preparation and under favorable conditions, and that belief still remained in him. To the Chinese mind the turn of a card, the cast of a die, the juxtaposition of numbers is more than a matter of blind chance; they are governed by laws, directed by intelligent forces, and it is the task of the player to put himself into harmony with those laws by the fitting observance of rites and practices or by a proper attunement of himself with those controlling forces.

In spite of his Western training Sam had not entirely shaken off that idea. He still remained something of a fatalist, too, therefore he played imperturbably and without trace of cupidity. He did not share in the excitement common to Europeans and Americans, and quite naturally he did not experience their pleasurable feeling of guilt in the doing of something forbidden by law, by custom and by common sense.

He was winning again to-night and the table at which he played was crowded. As usual, other players had followed him and were betting as he did. Alanna Wagner sat on one of the high stools close at his side, so close in fact that her body touched his. Her bare elbows rested upon the table, her chin was in her cupped hands, her eyes followed Sam's movements. Occasionally she looked up into his face and smiled silently at some word of his. She was completely oblivious to her surroundings and unaware of anybody but him. She had lost, as usual, and now she surrendered herself to the fascination of observing him.

It was not often that this girl entertained herself by looking on at the doings of others, for she was not a passive person and rarely found contentment in inaction. Her brooding silence, now, her sudden flashing smile, the light in her dark eyes when they met his evidenced an unusual interest and an intimacy of understanding which other people noticed and remarked upon. She was doubtless aware of their looks and their comments but she gave no sign.

Beauty is a jewel too rare to be placed in the keeping of careless hands and nature sees to it that no good-looking woman is unconscious of her charms. Vanity is offensive only in the plain. Alanna Wagner was more than good-looking even in repose, when animated she was a dancing flame, and she was comfortably aware of it. She lost no op-

portunity to take all possible advantage of her feminine attractions. Her hair was reddish brown and of fine texture, but of rebellious quality and she wore it cropped like a boy's: her face was willful and impetuous and in it were set a pair of insolent, tempestuous eyes, hazel in the sunlight, almost black at night: her brows were rather heavily penciled for a girl, which lent her face a certain forcefulness. People of leisure and of means nowadays are usually distinguished by their healthy appetites and their physical fitness and Alanna's body was that of an athlete; her skin was tanned by sun and wind, her muscles were firm, she was a vital, spirited, normal young animal. Her waist was long, her legs were slim, she possessed a free, unstudied grace of movement which bewildered those people who knew Al Wagner. They were at a loss to account for such an amazing combination and contradiction of the patrician and the commoner.

Heretofore she had represented everything that was haughty, elusive and intractable, but she had finally surrendered and patrons of the Paradis Casino stared curiously at the imperturbable young man beside her, giving him credit for unusual qualities of mind or mesmeric powers of an uncommon degree. This fellow Lee had made a really notable conquest—even the Paris papers, in their society columns, were commenting upon his affair with the California heiress—and yet he was thoroughly nonchalant, he appeared as indifferent to it as—well,

as to his almost nightly winnings at the gambling tables. The luck of some people!

"Come along, darling. I'm tired," Alanna said suddenly.

Sam nodded. "I was only playing to amuse you," he told her.

As they left their places she inquired: "How much winner are you?"

"Oh, quite a lot, I believe!"

"Don't you *know?*"

Sam shrugged carelessly. "What's the difference? I already have more money than I need."

"Isn't there any kick in beating the game? Haven't you any enthusiasms whatever?"

He inclined his head and smiled. "I have many. Winning and losing a few dollars isn't one of them, however."

"I gloat like a miser when I pick up a bet and I'm furious when I lose. I can't bear to lose at anything."

"If I felt that way I wouldn't gamble. There are things I enjoy infinitely more than playing. I love beautiful things—silks, ivories, jewels, marbles, paintings. I ——"

"Why don't you like me? I'm beautiful." Alanna asked this question abruptly and she fixed her dark eyes upon her companion's face with disconcerting intensity. She did not heed what he said, it was only a meaningless pleasantry anyhow, but she noted a certain change in his voice and a slow alteration

in his color which contented her. She had a way of cutting through a conversation and voicing irrelevant thoughts: she embarrassed Sam further by inquiring: "Do you realize how frightfully good-looking you are?"

He shook his head and evaded her question as gracefully as he could.

They had passed out of the Grande Salon and were in the soft carpeted promenade, the Peacock Alley of Paradis, with its mellow paintings, its tapestries, its palms and cut flowers. Ahead of them was the ornate café, a famous rendezvous for amusement seekers; from it issued the music of the Casino orchestra, one of the finest in Europe. Many couples were dancing, it was a brilliant scene. People bowed and smiled at Miss Wagner as they passed but she barely noticed them for she was absorbed in the young man at her side.

Together they entered the café; with an ostentatious flourish they were shown to a table adjoining the dance floor and a restrained riot occurred over the privilege of seating them. Sam placed his order, smiling queerly the while. This was all an Arabian Nights illusion and he had never become accustomed to it; he recalled certain words he had written to his honorable father, "How true it is that destiny is unavoidable." . . . "Portents at birth and the juxtaposition of celestial bodies." . . . "The dignity and respect which attends those engaged in the distinguished arts." . . . "The grati-

fying honors due one of royal lineage.". . . Was he Sam Lee of Mott Street, or was he indeed a Son of the Gods? Certainly marks of Celestial favor were being showered upon him. It was strange, it was bewildering, it was incredible. He wondered if he could be dreaming.

Alanna drew a deep breath. "I'd give something for your luck," she said.

Sam spoke almost harshly, "Why? Is it good luck to win the things you can't keep, and to never attain what you really want?"

"Meaning what? What do you want that you can't attain? Who is she?"

He shrugged, then, after a moment, he inquired: "Would you care to know why I'm so lucky in yonder?"

"Of course I'd care to know."

He thrust a finger inside his collar and brought forth a cord to which was attached a small cloth bag.

"What is it? A scapular?"

"Exactly!"

"I didn't know you're a Catholic. I'm not."

"What is your religion?"

"Religion? If you had eyes you'd see I'm a sonworshiper. But I put my principal faith in diet and exercise. If we're going to wax religious you'd better cancel your wine order, Sam. Convert me, please: I'm a pagan. I'll take your word on anything. . . . By the way, have you got any money?

Not that I care, but father was asking me. It's the first question a modern parent puts when his daughter shows interest in a fellow. If she answers in the affirmative, anxiety lessens, the conversation lags. Dad says I'm looking hatchy and beginning to cluck like a hen."

"I have nothing I can call my own," Sam declared.

"Well, so much for that. I've got plenty. Dad has more money than a bank." Dimples popped suddenly into Alanna's olive cheeks. "Now then, why is it you hate me? I'm reasonably good-looking——"

"Unreasonably! Terribly! Devastatingly!" Sam agreed.

"—— I'm smart."

"The treasures of your intellect fill me with a feeling of abject poverty." These words were spoken lightly but breathlessly, nevertheless.

"I'm full of that indefinable, magnetic something——"

"You are, indeed. And I adore you."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, seize me and—dance me." Sam and Alanna rose, she swayed forward into his arms and they moved away. This was intoxication.

Their table was ready when they returned to it. For a while they sat in silence then Sam began, "Did you notice those people who spoke to me? The woman looks Spanish."

"The one with the big comb? Who are they?"

"Friends of Mr. Bathurst's. The man is an oil operator from Oklahoma, she's his wife, and Bathurst told me how they met. I'd like to tell you."

"Why?"

"I—It's an interesting story, to me at least. He met her in Monte Carlo: she was with a young Peruvian and he was struck by her beauty. She *is* lovely, isn't she?"

"I don't care for any woman you speak of in that tone."

"He was wondering how he could manage to meet her when she surprised him by bowing and smiling——"

"The Spanish hussy!"

"She isn't Spanish at all. She's an Osage girl."

"A—what?"

"An Osage Indian girl, from his own state. She had known him as a child. The Osages are rich, she had been educated at an Eastern college. The upshot of it was—a real love match. I considered it quite extraordinary."

"In what way?" Alanna queried.

"Because—many people have such strong racial prejudice."

"Bosh!"

"Have you none? Would you marry an—Indian, a man of another race?"

"I was engaged to one—to an East Indian. It was just fun, of course, but he was a dandy fellow

and he wasn't very dark. I couldn't stand a dark one. You have the strangest ideas, Sam. I couldn't help marrying a man I cared for. I'm thoroughly spoiled, thank Heaven! There aren't any taboos among people of our class. I'd marry him or—nobody else would. Weren't you ever in love?"

"Never, until I danced with you."

Alanna leaned forward, her bare elbows upon the table, her chin in her hands, as usual; her eyes searched his and a dizziness came over him. He had never dreamed that any girl could be so alluring as this one or that he would ever read in any pair of eyes the message that he read in Alanna Wagner's.

"What are you thinking?" she asked him finally.

In a shaking voice he answered: "Only that among the sublime virtues is an intelligent submission to the inevitable."

They danced again when the music resumed and each felt some change in the other. A new vitality, some electric quality had entered into Sam and Alanna thrilled to it: her body relaxed, came closer to his, her breath beat hotly upon his cheek. As if by mutual consent they ceased dancing at the end of the café nearest the open air and passed out upon the portico that overlooked the sea. The night was still, it was warm and fragrant with the perfume of roses rising from the sunken gardens and thither Sam and Alanna moved. Together they descended the wide marble steps. These gardens

are a feature, and the very loveliest, of the famous Paradis Casino, for there French skill in horticulture has reached perfection. Beyond them and running parallel with the cliffs is the handsome Avenue of the Cypresses, equally well advertised on souvenir postcards. This avenue of stately trees was doubtless laid out as a lovers' lane in the beginning for it affords an enchanting view of the harbor, especially on a moonlight night, and time has made it ever more beautiful and more popular among those sentimentally inclined. However, with the growing reputation of Paradis as a fast resort it has gained a somewhat sinister reputation, for it is discreetly lighted and more than one reputation has suffered by reason of its shadows, its secluded resting places and its romantic glamour. Discreet married women avoid the Avenue of the Cypresses, and only members of the younger set walk there after dark. Suicides have happened there, too. Alanna knew the place well.

Here she and Sam found themselves without knowing which one had led the way. As a matter of fact, neither had led, their feet had shown them the path, but when they had passed out of the light and into the gloom, they paused and faced each other as if at some unspoken signal. Each saw the other dimly and yet with a revealing distinctness. Alanna observed that Sam was intensely agitated, some faint perfume that she wore rose to his nostrils, made him drunk. For him it was a mo-

ment so crowded with emotion that his brain refused to register it and ever afterwards its memory was blurred. All the longings, all the smothered desires, all the unruly appetites of his life rose up and flooded him.

He had her in his arms, he was crushing her to him and bruising her lips with his: a ruthless passion overpowered him and the girl responded recklessly, unreservedly: her embrace was as close as his. It was capitulation for both, and conquest, too; a sudden bursting of all constraint, an explosive shattering of inhibitions, and the ecstasy of it was keener than a knife thrust. Intoxication, madness, abandon, bliss, triumph—words are weak symbols for emotions strong enough to paralyze the very processes of thought. The restrained and reasoned feelings can be shaped into speech, even grief can be made articulate, but no lover has the eloquence with which to portray the passion of his first fierce kiss of yearning.

Alanna had considered Sam cold, she had called him an iron man. But the iron in him had melted and the heat of it scorched her. Other men had made love to her and she had been pleasurably stirred thereby; she was no stranger to caresses, but never had kisses burned her as did Sam's, never had she felt a rapture such as he awoke in her. All other emotions she had experienced were pale counterfeits of this.

Voices sounded, people passed close by but neither

Sam nor Alanna noticed them. They were entranced: they sat a while on a convenient bench, they rose and moved on aimlessly through the shadows, absorbed in each other. Time passed, it grew dark in the gardens behind them and even darker here, and they realized that the lights had been turned off, but the stars remained. The sound of the fountains persisted soothingly, occasionally a sleepy bird complained. The orchestra in the café had stopped long ago.

The lovers were silent much of the time, and when they talked it was usually about nothing. They were breathless, incoherent: their thoughts were concerned only with their emotions and the full wonder of this miracle that had overwhelmed them could not be put into speech.

"A thousand times I've dreamed about holding you like this," Sam murmured. "I seem to experience feelings I've always known." He was profoundly interested in this phenomenon. "I've thought about you constantly, every night I've fallen asleep haunted by your voice. It was like the music of some stringed instrument sighing in the moonlight. I've breathed the fragrance of your hair and it was like sweet-scented honeysuckle."

"That's father's soap," Alanna told him. "The odor lasts."

"He asked you if I had money and I told you——"

"Don't tell me anything, darling. What does it

matter? What does anything matter? To-night I'm not his daughter, I'm not flesh and blood, there's nothing sane or sensible about me. I'm the Sleeping Princess who is still rubbing her eyes. You might be a stranger, some beggar—it wouldn't make any difference."

"Thank Heaven, I'm no beggar. I dare say I have as much as your father has, or even more. Some day at least ——"

"I'm sorry you told me that. I don't want you to be anybody or to have anything but me. I wish you were—'less than the dust'."

"But why?"

"If you don't feel the same about me I can't explain. Don't ask me to think or to talk sensibly. I've just learned who I am and ——"

"And I must tell you who I am."

"Not to-night! Don't dare! Sam, darling—why is it that you utterly detest the ground I walk on?"

"My girdle of gems! My Temple of Ten Thousand Delights, I worship you."

"Then kiss me."

In the gloom behind their seat was the white statue of a slim, nude dancer: she was lightly poised, one knee was lifted, her head was thrown back, her arms were upflung. She was the very spirit of youth, of joy, of abandon. Alanna drew Sam's face closer to hers, her creamy shoulders and her bosom were as smooth and round as those of the dancing girl.

When finally they mounted the steps to the Casino, it was dark. A watchman on his rounds halted and eyed them suspiciously, then shrugged and turned away.

"I had no idea what time it is," Sam faltered as he peered at his watch. "What will your father say?"

Alanna laughed and drew his arm closer about her waist. "He's a sensible person. He'll probably say it's better for a girl to be out late than never."

Alanna was usually up and out of doors long before her father had his breakfast; he was surprised the next morning, therefore, when she languidly entered their dining room and sank into a chair across the table from him. She wore a handsome suit of lounging pajamas, she was pale, she moved like a sleepwalker, her lids were heavy and she eyed him as if from a great distance.

"Hullo! Hullo!" he began cheerily. "What detained you, my dear? And how do I happen to be honored with ——?" He paused and leaned forward, startled. "Good Lord, Alanna, what ails you?"

"Dunt esk," she said with a feeble wave of her hand. "The milk man delivered me and I haven't closed an eye. I shall never sleep again: it's a criminal waste of time. And, darling, don't be surprised at anything you hear about me, for it's only half the truth. If some watchman tells you he saw me at

such and such an hour in this or that place, don't be shocked for it's true. I've been on a long journey. I have explored unknown lands and sailed uncharted seas. It's a wonder I got back with the cream bottles." The speaker allowed her dreamy gaze to wander about the luxurious breakfast room. "My! How the old place has changed."

"First, have you had your coffee?"

"I've had nothing. I've had everything."

"All right. Now then, what the dickens have you been up to?"

"Heaven! Up to the Mohammedans' paradise. No, not that: the Mohammedan women's paradise." Alanna fetched a lingering sigh and let herself sink more limply into her chair. She was boneless, spineless, inert. "I soloed last night for the first time. I did loops and spirals and wing-overs. I went into a nose dive finally and I couldn't pull out of it. Gee, I'm shattered!"

"You were out with that Lee fellow, weren't you?"

"Yes. We sat in the park all night, like a sailor and his sweetie."

"In the *park?*" Al Wagner's eyes protruded, his mouth fell open.

"Breathe it, darling: don't bark. Say it softly and with reverence. . . . Under the trees, with the winking stars above us and a draught on my legs! I had no wrap. It's a wonder I didn't take my death of cold." Alanna gazed at her father in a languor

more expressive than words: her lids fluttered. In a spiritless sing-song she recited: " 'Behold the wreck of the Hesperus that sailed the wintry sea. . . . The skipper answered never a word, for a frozen corpse was she.' "

"I—*I'm* frozen," the father managed to say.

"Which makes it unanimous. I'm asleep, my circulation has stopped, I'm delirious. But don't waken me, don't call a doctor. He might cure me."

Wagner stared at his daughter in amazement and in disbelief. "You don't honestly mean ——? Is that on the level, about the park? Good God! . . . You—you seem to be proud of it! You rave like a lunatic. Why, you're behaving like a brazen hussy. . . . You need a strait-jacket: you—you ought to have a ball and chain."

"Some people call 'em that."

"Out all night! With a—stranger! I never heard of such a thing." The speaker was growing apoplectic, he was stuttering, but Alanna laughed.

"A *stranger!* Oh, father, dear father! He was, but he isn't. I know him, backwards and sideways. *I'm* the stranger, precious old egg-plant. . . . You'll burst an artery, darling: I say it in warning. I never knew myself, even faintly, until—going on eleven-thirty, just passed. No, Mr. Wagner, I had met your charming daughter in a casual way but I never became really well acquainted with her until last night. Such feeling, such depth, such intensity! A most unusual girl and a great credit to you. . . . He

—kissed me, dad! Excuse the shiver, won't you? It was an Adventure in Souls."

Unusual and distressing sounds issued from Al Wagner. For once he was genuinely shocked. Mere profanity proved inadequate to express his emotions: he tried it but choked; gradually his indignation took coherency and form and he began a stern rebuke. Before he had gone far Alanna interrupted. For the first time she spoke crisply:

"Don't start singing hosannas; I'm on edge. A fine Messiah you make. How many times have you come in late? How many flat keys do you carry?"

Both were speaking at once, but at something her father said the girl cried, even more sharply than before,

"Now you're getting low and slimy in your thoughts, precious grubworm. Lift up your chin. There's no excuse to cast me off. I'm not going out into the night——"

"You've *been!*" Wagner growled. "Don't tell me that a decent girl can neck a fellow all night in the dark and——"

"I had practically no voice in the proceedings, governor. Honest! You don't know that man: a woman is putty in his hands, a quivering protoplasm. I was picked up, swept away—I was no more than a—a silken streamer whipped by a raging sirocco. Isn't that pretty? Of course I prayed that the storm wouldn't blow itself out and I'm not saying that I didn't advance the spark a little, now and then. But

that's my business. Try and get it through that ivory wig block of yours, pious, that I'm a free agent and answerable only to myself for anything I do. If that concept pierces your frontal bone you'll begin to understand something about the new era. But—you're a pre-war parent. Why should I destroy your illusions?"

"'Pre-war!' 'Illusions!' This freedom you talk about! I can't make out, for the life of me, whether it's freedom or license, innocence or guilt."

"Do you confuse innocence with ignorance? Possibly purity is the word you have in mind. Men are so vile."

"Oh, stop your flip chatter! If I thought you were as sophisticated as you pretend to be, I—I'd strangle you. But you're just being smart, I suppose. That's post-war stuff and it's as poisonous as the other post-war stuff we're getting. For once I—I almost wish Anna hadn't divorced me. Damned if I don't! I'm afraid I've made a botch of you." In honest distress the father wagged his bald head, he stroked it with an uncertain hand, he made moist sounds with his lips.

"Darling! Please don't cluck! Even Mother couldn't stand that. Quack if you must, but don't cluck. I've told you in a dozen ways, during the past few minutes, what you should know without being told, namely, that I've done nothing to be ashamed of. Must I use hot towels and massage it in?"

"You've got me licked," Wagner admitted. "I don't know yet whether you're lying——"

"Lying is such a waste of effort."

"—— all I know is that when a girl goes as far as you've gone with this fellow, she owes it to herself to marry him and be damned quick about it."

"Amen! At last we're in accord."

"Of course he asked you to marry him?"

"I—don't seem to recall it. Not in so many words. But we had such a lot of other things to talk about. He mentioned something about money—I told him you were mercenary—and he's well to do."

"That's a relief." Wagner was considerably mollified. "He'll *need* to be well fixed. . . . Of course you love him?"

"I long for him as a taxi driver pants for rain. I'd marry him if he had six wives."

This remark brought a scowl of disapproval. The father grunted: with assumed malice he said: "I'd laugh if he turned out to be a bootlegger."

"In that case we might supply you with some good stuff."

"Lord, but you're tickled with yourself! No thought for anybody else, eh? Well, I think you've behaved disgracefully."

Alanna nodded: she sampled a melon without enthusiasm. "Disgracefully. Inexcusably. I was most unladylike. But he liked it. I landed the order. I broke down his sales resistance. . . . Gee! I never

went so long without sleep and needed it less. I'm just one big daze with a pair of eyes in it."

"Are his people of any consequence?"

"I presume you're thinking about the Four Hundred. There isn't any Four Hundred, precious seedling, or we wouldn't be so prominent. . . . Lee! Alanna Lee! It has a nice sound. I don't care who he is. To me he's the direct descendant of that stainless knight, Robert E. . . . Funny what ails my vision: yesterday he was just a nice, medium-sized male person, to-day he's taller than the whole Stone Mountain group. And what a warrior that boy is!"

"I hope you won't object if I investigate this giant?"

"Go as far as you like. I'm doing the same, at eleven, in a one-piece suit. We're swimming together. If he touches me I'll unravel. Whatever you learn about him don't tell me for—I'd miss you at the wedding."

"So! You propose to marry him whether or no?"

"Nothing but paralysis will prevent me. . . . Will you throw a big wedding for me, reckless? I'll bet you're thinking already about what you'll give us! It will be something nice, of course, you extravagant wretch. You'll butter us all over with generosity, for you never do things by halves, do you? No, he answered, as she knew he would. Why not a small fifteen room co-op on Park Avenue? Furnished, of course: you have such exquisite taste. And a country place on the Island. It matters not how simple it is

if the stables are roomy and there's a greenhouse and a swimming pool. Surely it's worth that much to get rid of me."

"I don't want to get rid of you," the father declared with real feeling, but Alanna was concerned with her own emotions rather than with his. Dreamily she murmured:

"We'll call it the Villa Dementia. We'll plant passion flowers and hysteria vines and honeymoon-suckles and sunstroke flowers everywhere."

"Jove! You have got it bad," Wagner reluctantly admitted. "Well, I've tried to be a good father to you and to give you everything you want. I hope this will last and that he can handle you."

There was a malicious glint in Alanna's eyes when she turned them upon him and said: "He can! He has!"

"That's not smart: it's just vulgar," the man said angrily, and rose from his chair. "You get a lot of fun out of shocking me but wait till you have a child of your own and she tries it on you." He strode off towards his own rooms.

The spoon slipped out of Alanna's nerveless fingers, for a while she stared mistily into space and a light came into her face which not even her father had seen there. A child of her own! A child of Sam's. Here was a thought. She thrilled, she closed her eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

SAM and Alanna met on the beach at the bathing hour but they did nothing more energetic than sit in the sand. They had little time alone with each other, however, for the place was crowded and Alanna was popular. Both were still in something of a daze and Sam in particular experienced a feeling of utter unreality: only an occasional meaning look from her, a pressure of her fingers or some involuntary act of proprietorship convinced him that he was not under the spell of a pleasant delusion and that the hazy events of the night before were not purely imaginary.

They arranged to meet again at five for the hotel tea dance, and to dine together that evening; then Sam walked home in even greater perturbation than when he had left it. He was physically and emotionally tired, but he found it as impossible now to compose himself as it had been during the early morning hours. Following his return from Alanna's hotel as dawn was breaking, an unwelcome thought had obtruded itself. It had occurred to him that she might not know that he was an Oriental.

This possibility had presented itself suddenly: it had halted him in his tracks, it had turned him cold. Impatiently he had dismissed it. Of course, she

knew. Everybody knew. His nationality had afforded a subject for polite discussion at more than one of Bathurst's dinner parties and such things get around. Alanna could not help but know: for that matter, his conduct, his attitude towards her must have made it plain. Reassured, he had walked on.

But his mind had reverted to the question again and again and it continued to bother him. Paradis was a queer, feverish place: people came and went: one sensation followed another: there was nothing orderly or normal about it. Nobody inquired who his neighbor might be.

These apprehensions, no doubt, were the result of his momentary lack of equilibrium, a part of his emotional reaction, so he reasoned: all the same, he blamed himself for running the slightest risk: he should not have permitted his acquaintance with Alanna to ripen into love without making certain that she knew everything about him. He argued weakly that he had tried to tell her, but had lacked the opportunity. In this, however, there was no comfort: he should have created an opportunity.

But who could imagine that a casual relationship such as theirs could, without warning, change in a moment into something—like this? Friendship is an intermediate step in the growth of love. Prior to last evening, however, they had been scarcely more than acquaintances. Alanna was a notorious little flirt, she went to outrageous lengths with any man who interested her and for that reason he had

remained on guard, he had observed the most rigid, the most frigid formality towards her. She had made all the advances while he had constantly borne in mind the barriers separating them. That was all very well to think about now but he realized with dismay that Alanna Wagner jumped bars like a colt—just because they were there—and that more than likely he had pursued the very course most certain to pique her interest in him. He felt sorely concerned.

The whole trouble was there had been no faintest signal of what was coming, no stock-taking time: one moment they were Miss and Mister to each other, in a manner of speaking, then—crossed wires, a spark, an explosion, and they had found themselves in each other's arms, stripped to their very souls. Too late, then, for talk.

Even at the time it happened he had not been wholly convinced that either of them was sincere. There had been a suspicion in his mind that they were in the grip of a momentary madness, a midnight witchery that would vanish with the day. Most men experience such adventures. But now ——!

Reason assured him that his apprehensions must be unfounded, and yet, assuming that they were not, what difference did it make? This he finally asked himself. Alanna was unlike other girls, she didn't care what he was: she had said so. She was a creature of resistless desires, a pagan, she had no taboos,

social, racial or otherwise. He felt much easier at the recollection of her statement to that effect. "Less than the dust!" There was a majesty, a heroic dignity to the love of a tempestuous creature like her: it stopped at nothing: it counted no costs: it took all and it gave all.

Well, the cataclysm was over: why think about it? The manner in which she had risen to it had effected a change in him, too. The spirit of some bold, impetuous ancestor had taken hold of him and he was no longer Sam Lee, the son of Lee Ying: he had swelled to prodigious proportions, he was a man of importance and of size. He was no common person but an Iron Capped Prince. Some Chinese extravagance colored his thoughts as he lost himself in dizzy contemplation of the happy miracle that had occurred to him: his pride of self, his pride of race grew. Alanna was no soap king's daughter, she was a slender princess drooping like a willow staff beneath the weight of her shimmering brocades and he was a Conqueror out of the North. He was in armor, arrows fell from his body and lance blades bent: his yellow banners scraped the clouds, ten thousand chariots rumbled at his heels and his voice was hoarser than the thunder.

He had come for his bride. He had stormed the gates, he had struck the inner doors and they had fallen, he had passed into the farthest courtyard where dwelt the Jewel of the Universe. His eyes were blinded by the sight of her and she swooned at

his coming: their love had been born of the lightning. . . . Son of the Gods! At last there was a meaning to those words. Chinese? To be sure. He was a proud, unbending Prince of Han. He wore a ruby in his cap and men saluted him.

Mr. Wagner eyed the card which the man in hotel livery brought him. Beneath the name was written in pencil "Personal."

"Does she want to see me, or my daughter?" he inquired.

The employee arched his brows, shrugged, murmured an excuse for his ignorance of "the Englis'," whereupon Wagner repeated his question in a louder voice. He did this several times. After a while, more by reason of gesticulation than of emphasis, the fellow understood and made it plain that the visitor wished to see Monsieur, not Mademoiselle.

"Um-m! How does she look? Is she—jeune? Er—*jeunesse?* Jolie? Get me? Petite? Chic? Nifty?" Graphic gestures accompanied these queries: Al Wagner appeared to be modeling an imaginary female form out of invisible clay.

"Oui, m'sieu'! Oui!" The footman nodded, his face lighted and he, too, fell back upon pantomime. Having served Mr. Al Wagner these several weeks and understanding his playful moods, he was encouraged to describe confidentially both by word and by hand the appearance of the caller. "Good! You like! Nice bébé!" he concluded.

The fellow was quite enthusiastic and plainly he considered the stranger an altogether pleasing mademoiselle of slender figure and engaging personality: his undulating gestures, a finger kiss tossed into the air could mean nothing less.

Mr. Wagner looked at the ornamental gilt clock on the mantel. Fat golden cupids crawled over it and one of them pointed roguishly at the dial which read eleven-thirty. Alanna was at the bathing club with Sam Lee and would not be home for more than an hour.

"Show her up," Wagner directed and handed the fellow a banknote. He went to a mirror, adjusted his tie, which needed no adjusting, smoothed his eyebrows and touched up his short-cropped gray moustache. He wondered if that frog knew a good looker when he saw one. Probably not. Probably she would turn out to be a brunette. Probably she —— Wagner preferred blondes and he had never understood why men went so crazy over Alanna. . . . Out all night with that Lee fellow and now at the beach with him. He proposed to look up Bathurst this afternoon and make some searching inquiries. . . . He hoped this girl was smart-looking and had small feet.

The caller was indeed blonde, and pretty, and smartly gotten up. Her feet were not too large. Wagner greeted her with warmth and they talked in a desultory manner for several minutes. He purposely avoided inquiring the reason for her coming

and monopolized the conversation in a warm, cheery manner, the while he put her at ease. It was nice to meet fellow Americans in a foreign country and a pleasure to meet a beautiful young woman anywhere. Had they met before? What a pity! He knew so many young women and the name was not unfamiliar. Hart! He had known a number of Harts and had won a few in his time. Ha, ha! He had a daughter but to all intents and purposes he was a bachelor of leisure. Yes, indeed, heart whole and fancy free. Time hung heavy on his hands and he was thinking of a little trip to Paris. He had never really seen Paris—not as it should be seen: that is to say with somebody like Miss Hart who knew all the historical places. Mr. Wagner was a great sightseer: just a big boy out for fun, and hang the expense. She was studying art! Now that *was* interesting. He had spent a lot of money on art. He had helped more than one promising girl along artistic lines.

These warm confessions failed to thaw the visitor perceptibly.

"I read in the *Herald* that you were here with your daughter," she began, when he finally allowed her an opportunity of stating her business.

"Yes. She's usually in the papers. She counts that day lost when she isn't."

"There have been several references to her engagement."

"Which one?" Wagner chuckled.

"To Mr. Lee; Sam Lee. I happen to know him."

"Oh! Indeed!" The father found his interest directed along a new line. "Friend of yours, is he?"

"Yes." There was a pause. "It's true, then?"

"Um-m, a little premature, possibly."

"You're probably wondering why I'm here, and—I hardly know, myself. Sam and I were at college together. It's through him that I came to Paris, to study. I mean it's—it's all right in every way, but my people were unable to send me. They're not in sympathy with my ambitions, anyhow. Sam's father is rich —— Do you know why he's over here? Why he quit college?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"I think you ought to know. He was expelled."

"What for?"

"Over a girl. He got her in trouble. It was in the papers and you must have read it if you were in New York at the time."

"Possibly I did. I never remember what newspapers say and fortunately neither does anybody else. I don't even remember what they said about me, but it was scandalous. I hope you didn't come here to tell me that Sam was a college cut-up. That's nothing against him. I'm interested in him, of course, but girls have a way of getting into trouble without ——"

"No. I didn't come here to tell you that, except as a part ——"

"A part of what?"

"Well, I have some newspaper clippings. I thought ——"

"Don't show them to me," Wagner said indifferently. "Nothing is so dead as yesterday's newspaper story. Now, let's understand each other. I'm a business man and I talk plainly, I cut corners. Are you the girl he got into trouble?"

"Mr. *Wagner!*"

"All right. No harm in asking. I'm old enough to be your father and anything you tell me is buried. It's Masonic. Personally, I like 'em wild, and the fact that he sent you to Paris —— But that's out. What *have* you got on him?"

"Why—nothing. It isn't that. We were awfully good friends —— He—well, he asked me to marry him. He did, really."

"I see. And you have his letters. Very well, I'll consider a proposition. My daughter has made up her mind and there's no stopping her. Those letters are worth as much to me as to a newspaper. What's the figure?"

The caller was both offended and indignant. Her eyes widened, her face grew white. "I'm no blackmailer," she protested. "You're insulting. I read in the papers that he was engaged to your daughter and about his winning a fortune at the Casino and being so popular and everything —— 'Western heiress to millions engaged to prominent young American.' It made me laugh."

Wagner was eyeing Miss Hart with alert in-

tensity now. "Yes? Well—make *me* laugh. What's funny about it?"

"I'll show you——" With shaking hands the speaker ripped open her purse, seized a bundle of folded clippings and tossed them into Wagner's lap. "There's your 'prominent young American,' your future son-in-law. Maybe you know all about him and maybe you don't."

The man adjusted his glasses, unfolded the clippings, then his expression changed. He stared open mouthed at what he saw: his hands began to tremble. "Lee Ying, wealthy Mott Street merchant." "Palace of Imperial Bounty." "Scandal at Eastern University." There were pictures of a doll-faced girl and of Sam: sensational headlines; but Wagner did not read much of the story. He had no interest in it.

"My God!" he exclaimed. He shot a few searching questions at his caller, then he put the clippings in his pocket, rose and tramped about the room, perspiring profusely. After a while he paused and looked Miss Hart over from head to foot in a manner that caused her to flush and to pale.

"You say you were *engaged* to this Chinaman?"

"I said he asked me to marry him."

"Humph!" The man's lips curled. "Exactly. And he's paying your way in Paris. . . . Just why, may I ask, did you decide to come here and—and give me this treat?"

"That's my business. I—imagined you'd like to know the truth ——"

"Yes, of course. I don't happen to like your business, that's all. A mere personal whim. Well, miss, if you have no use for these clippings I'd like to keep them. And now—I think you'd better leave. You'll find the elevator on your left as you go down the hall." He turned and strode into his room. When he was alone he began to curse profanely.

The smartest people stopping at Paradis were usually to be found in certain places at fixed times of day, for everybody did pretty much the same things and social life followed an established routine. In the mornings, for instance, they were on the bridle paths, or at the tennis courts or watching the live bird shoots—the championships were run off here—and at eleven o'clock everybody went to the beach to see or to be seen. During the tennis matches the early afternoon witnessed another fashion show and there was golf, too: at tea time everybody danced at the Hotel Royale, either indoors or out of doors, depending upon the weather. From early evening onward the Casino, of course, was the center of attraction.

The Royale was a huge place and usually it was crowded: in the tea garden an American orchestra played in a fluted ivory and gold band shell and the patrons danced on a smooth stone floor laid level

with the grass. Tables were set thickly under the trees and around five o'clock when the place was thronged it was extremely gay and colorful.

Sam came early and secured a good table, for it peeved Alanna to be anywhere except in the very center of things, and as he waited for her he noted a phenomenon which amused him considerably. Of course, he knew comparatively few of the many visitors to this resort and those he did know were recent acquaintances, nevertheless it seemed as if everybody knew him. Those he had met took pains to bow to him and to smile in a cordial manner, others eyed him and spoke to each other significantly. What curiosity: what mammon worship, he reflected. Any recipient of Alanna Wagner's favor, by reason of her father's wealth and prominence, became at once a celebrity. In spite of his cynical amusement Sam experienced an agreeable thrill at his good fortune. What a queer prank of fate it was; how odd that he should experience this evidence of celestial favor. It staggered him and he wondered if he would be able to live up to it with befitting dignity. Yesterday a ragged toiler in the bowels of a cattle ship, to-day the envy of Europe's most fashionable watering place! Truly, a man's destiny is inevitable. Well, the auguries at his birth had foretold great riches and much luck and his star was certainly in the heavens now: his charms were potent.

Unconsciously he felt for the scapular with its

golden talisman and missed it. He remembered that he had left it on his dresser when he went to swim and had forgotten to put it on when he came in—forgotten for the first time since Eileen Cassidy gave it to him. No wonder. He was not accountable for anything to-day. It was as much as ever he had remembered to put on his collar and his necktie.

Alanna was almost up to the table before he saw her and rose to his feet, and he resented the fact that he had been so unobservant: it robbed him of a precious, breathless moment of anticipation. How lithe and free, how swift and purposeful she was. Always in a hurry. Life for her ran furiously and she rode it like a surf rider balanced upon the crest of a wave. Where others wallowed she flung herself forward with a resistless rush.

She wore the same dress she had worn that morning at the beach: it was the first time Sam had ever seen her twice in the same costume and he assumed she had changed her mind about dancing. She carried a swagger stick under her arm or what looked like one—in reality it was a leather riding crop—her face was stormy, against its underlying pallor her tan stood out curiously. It was like a thin brown veil beneath which her agitation was visible.

She came towards Sam like an arrow and when their eyes met he stiffened, a dreadful premonition smote him. He turned suddenly sick—the feeling was all too familiar, a wretched, humble cringing of

the soul. And he read her expression correctly, for he had beheld it many times on many other faces, as, for instance, on that night in the roadhouse with Alice Hart and her friends. Usually it was masked, people tried to conceal it, but not Alanna. Like a flimsy garment all Sam's confidence, all his recent pride was snatched away from him and he stood naked.

The girl was saying something to him in a fierce, hoarse, accusing voice: never had a woman been in such an insane, such a deadly rage. Sam did not understand her words, for his ears were roaring, the ground was swaying under his feet. He gripped the iron garden chair from which he had arisen and held himself erect against the tempest. He uttered no sound, for something clutched his throat: another ruthless hand closed down upon his heart and stopped its beating. He felt as if he were dying.

Alanna's accusation came like a burst of flame, it scorched and withered. The scene was brief, the actors held their tableau only for a moment, but that was ample to attract attention. The hum of conversation ceased, people nearby turned strained and startled faces over their shoulders, some of them rose. Through the silence Alanna's passionate voice cut like a knife and listeners heard her cry:

"You rotten yellow cur! I'd rather let a nigger touch me than a Chinaman."

There was a gasp, a commotion. A woman at an adjoining table uttered a thin scream, for with her

last words Alanna raised her riding crop and slashed Sam with it. She was in a frenzy: she struck him not once, but time and again.

It was an exhibition so incredibly savage, so fantastic, so unbelievable as to paralyze the onlookers; it was more than shocking. But the paralysis was only momentary. There was a startled outcry, waiters came running, patrons pressed forward and closed in.

Sam took those blows without flinching, he neither bowed his head nor shielded it. He felt the cruel, cutting impact of the crop across his face, his neck, his arms: it stunned him but it inflicted no pain. He was partially blinded, a spasm twisted his facial muscles, closed one eye: the slim, iron frame work of the chair bent between his straining fingers.

Alanna flung the whip aside, turned and walked away with her head high, and her eyes flashing. A clatter of voices arose; men spoke to Sam but he did not understand what they said. They were shocked, astounded: plainly, however, they assumed that he had warranted his chastisement. There was quite a hubbub but nobody offered him more than perfunctory assistance.

His left eye had failed him completely now and a strange numbness affected that side of his face. It was wet, too, and he tasted blood. Whipped! Publicly horsewhipped! He, a Son of the Gods! His brain refused to register the fact. Even more paralyzing was the crash of his dream castle. Only

a few of these people understood the meaning of this outrage, but all would learn. They were avid sensation seekers. What a morsel for them. A Chinaman posing as white. Publicly whipped by a white girl for daring to touch her. They would applaud it.

Of a sudden he felt a terrible hatred for these men and women with their sickly, pallid faces and their rolling eyes. Apes! Buzzards! Carrion feeders!

Blindly he made his way through the crowd and out of the hotel grounds.

Cyril Bathurst, formally attired for the afternoon, paused in passing Sam's door and listened, then he tapped on it with his stick.

"Hello! That you, Lee?"

A muffled voice answered him.

"I was popping off to the Royale this very minute, to find you. May I come in?" Without awaiting Sam's response he entered the bedroom, then paused and stammered in dismay: "Hello, hello, hello! What's this? Bless me, what's happened you? An accident?" He flung aside his hat, cane and gloves and strode forward. "This is dreadful! Here, let me ——"

"Miss Wagner did it. . . . She used her crop on me. . . . At the Royale."

Bathurst paled. "Good Lord! I—can't believe it. I—I was afraid that little beast would let you

in for something. Let me give you a hand. . . . What filthy luck!"

"There's nothing to be done, thanks just the same. I've pretty well attended to myself. I'm terribly sorry on your account, sir. You see, everybody was there. It will be a wretched scandal."

"Never mind that. Let's have a look-see. . . . Hum-m! Some cuts, but nothing deep. A few welts. And that eye—the bally thing is swelled shut but I don't think it needs a doctor. Better take a stiff drink. . . . What ailed the little vixen?"

"We—went rather wild last night. I assumed she knew—everything about me." Abruptly Sam turned his back, his voice was hoarse when he went on, "It's bound to embarrass you dreadfully. I'm getting out on the next train."

"The hell you are!" Bathurst exploded. "You'll do nothing of the sort: you'll wash up, change your shirt and come with me. Back to the Royale! . . . Embarrass my foot! Why, the little devil! . . . I—I'm terribly rattled but you shan't leave." Excitedly he stamped about the room, he gesticulated and his cheeks grew purple. "Never heard of such an outrage. It makes me furious. . . . Who does she think she is? Common soap-suds creature! No. Never. Face it out, old boy. It's the sporting thing to do. Wear your service stripes and confound her. . . . By Heaven! You're my guest and my friend. I'm your sponsor. If she wanted to whip anybody,

why didn't she whip me? . . . Bah! Those rich Americans make me ashamed of the white race."

In a shaky voice Sam said, "You're a thoroughbred, but I refuse to humiliate you by——"

"Rubbish! I'm proud to know you. Proud to have you in my house. Proud to work with you. Proud to—— Bless my soul, this made me forget what I came in for! Here's a cablegram and it may be important. Just arrived and I was trotting off with it to the Royale, looking for you. . . . No. I'm going to have my way about this. Head up. Chest out—— Hello! . . . Damme! Is this Friday the thirteenth?"

Sam had opened the message. It was in five words but it turned him to stone. That disfiguring welt across his cheek and temple was still angry and it still trickled blood but the rest of his face slowly blanched. He handed the sheet to Bathurst who read:

Your father dying. Come.
Eileen.

Bathurst laid the cablegram aside. He placed a hand upon Sam's shoulder and pressed it, saying gravely:

"Jove! This is a poser. And coming at such a time. I'm sorry. You've told me what a wonderful man he is. . . . Take it easy for a minute. I'll step out and look up the sailings, while you pull yourself together. Meanwhile, don't concern yourself about packing. I'll attend to all that."

CHAPTER XV

"DID you wind it up?" Al Wagner inquired of his daughter when she burst into his presence late that afternoon. Alanna answered him shortly, and he voiced his relief: "Thank Heaven! I hope you didn't mince matters. The miserable skunk! . . . But I still think I was the one to do it. What did he say?"

Alanna tossed her arms aloft in a furious gesture. "He didn't open his mouth."

"He'd have opened his mouth to *me*," the father growled. "I know those Chinks: I've worked hundreds of them. Lord! I wish you had let me see him. I wouldn't have let him off so easily. Why, if he brags about this affair, it will ruin us."

Alanna uttered an explosive sound which indicated her contempt of consequences.

"Oh, jeer if you want to!" Wagner cried testily. "You know it's true just the same! They'd tar and feather him out in California. Yes, and they'd do the same to any white girl who even talked about marrying a Chink. . . . Now then, I hope this will be a lesson to you, young lady. It serves you right for playing around with every good-looking stranger you meet. Damnation! It turns me sick to think of his touching you."

Harshly Alanna said: "I horsewhipped him."

"Huh?" This interrogation came with a jerk, then, as the girl's words sank in, a paralysis crept over her father: horror numbed him.

"I wore out a crop on him."

"Horsewhipped him? . . . When? Where?"

"Just now. In the tea garden. In front of everybody. I'd have *killed* him if I could."

"Oh, my God!" The cry issued weakly from Wagner's lips, he seized his head, he stared wildly at his daughter.

Now that Alanna had found her voice words rushed from her, she stormed about the room in a gusty passion. But the tornado blew itself out as rapidly as it had blown up, she faltered, hesitated, her voice broke and her bosom heaved. Without warning, she burst into tears: blindly she ran to her father.

Wagner pushed her away. Roughly he exclaimed: "You little fool! . . . You ought to be horsewhipped yourself. Damned if I don't have you locked up: you're not safe to have around and I mean it. Why, that's just like your mother! *Whipping* a man! In *public!*"

Alanna shook him, she beat him with her fists, crying: "Hold me! Comfort me! Oh, Daddy, please ——! . . . A sweet father you are!" She gave him a shove that sent him reeling, then flung herself upon a chaise longue and buried her face in its pillows. She writhed, she kicked, she tore at the

cushions and scattered them, meanwhile uttering sounds of anguish.

Wagner approached and shook a clenched fist over her.

"Yell! Tear 'em up! Raise the hotel and have us thrown out!" he shouted. "That's your mother all over again. She always fixed it so we could never stop twice in the same place. You've got all she had, and more. This horsewhipping seems to run in the family: she threatened to horsewhip every woman I spoke to. But—you *did* it! . . . Do you realize what you've done to yourself? And to me? Bawled us out! . . . But no, you never stop to consider anything, do you? You couldn't act like a lady: you couldn't let the matter drop: you couldn't take that rotter off alone somewhere and beat him up. You had to do it in Tiffany's window."

"He—he *kissed* me!"

"So you boasted. Why in hell didn't you guard it as a family secret? Now it will be in the papers, of course. Oh, you're as private as an eclipse. Engaged to a *Chinaman!* We'll never live that down. I'm going to hunt a high place, drink poison, blow my brains out and jump off."

"He *can't* be a Chinaman. It's a lie!"

"Say ——! We've got to get out of here, quick."

"Chinamen don't kiss, they rub noses."

"I'll bet he has you arrested. Wouldn't *that* be pretty?"

Alanna wailed, a paroxysm of such violence seized her that she slid ungracefully off the lounge. She made no effort to rise: she merely sat on the floor and rocked herself in misery. "I love him," she moaned.

"Humph! That's likely," her father sneered. "Love a Chinaman!"

"I do. I don't care what he is. I love him."

"Then take it out in loving." Wagner spoke through clenched teeth. "We're going to leave here as soon as it gets dark enough to escape. . . . I can see the headlines to-morrow morning——"

The telephone rang with the startling suddenness of a machine-gun burst and he snatched it up.

"Hello! . . . Wagner speaking. . . . *Who?* . . . Tell him to go to hell!" He crashed the instrument down upon its stand. "There you are, Typhoid Mary! A gentleman of the press! Lord! You're the image of hard luck for me. Call your maid and get your things together before they break in on us."

"I'm not going," Alanna declared.

"Oh, you're not going! You propose to sit right there on the floor for the rest of your life! *I'm* running things from now on and you're leaving with me or—I'll pull your ears out."

"I won't budge. I like it here. I won't be run out of a place I like and you can't make me go."

With an effort that brought the sweat, Al Wagner calmed himself sufficiently to argue: when this

failed he fumed, then he raged and at last he threatened. Alanna was granite. She cajoled, she implored, she wept: she was stubborn, angry, spiteful and affectionate by turns. She took refuge finally in an attitude from which her father could not move her. She acknowledged that she had been impulsive and unwise and that her wicked, sinful temper had betrayed her into a serious indiscretion, but she owed it to herself and to her darling Albert to prove that she was no coward. Honor demanded that she face the music. She proposed to stay right here and to go right along as usual, with her head up and a smile on her lips. It was the only courageous and dignified thing to do. Who would know that Sam had been more than a mere acquaintance? Nobody. To run away would be a confession of guilt, an admission of shame. And what had she to be ashamed of? Nothing. If anybody dared to throw it up to her, get smart, she'd give them a taste of ——. Well, she had other crops and she could use them. What did she care for a little gossip? Not—*that!* There was mighty little that she cared for now: her heart was in pieces. She was a poor, fluttering, frightened bird and her wing was broken. It was her own fault, of course—Albert was right about that. In fact, he was right about everything. She was just a foolish, impulsive girl. Yes, and she had never shown him the love and the consideration she should have shown, but wait. She was a changed woman: the dross was burned away: nothing but

pure gold remained. She'd prove it. He wouldn't know her. People would ask who was that gentle, sweet-voiced girl with the face of a nun. Leave Paradis? Rather not. They would say no more about it—not another word. If sweetheart mentioned it again, she'd scream.

During the time it took her to voice her contrition and her promises of reform, the telephone rang three times. They let it ring.

In despair at last Wagner stamped off to his own suite and locked himself in. Later he ordered his dinner sent up and ate it in the solitude of his chamber. He wondered apprehensively if he would have to live in this wretched room, penned up like a wolf, until he grew a beard long enough to serve as a disguise.

Cyril Bathurst returned home late that night. He had attended a party where he had been forced to listen to various accounts of the occurrence at the tea dance and to comments upon racial questions which did not set well with him, hence he was not in an agreeable mood.

He was astonished to find Alanna Wagner waiting for him.

"Where is Mr. Lee?" she inquired without preamble.

"On his way to Paris. He sails to-morrow for America."

"Why did he go?"

Bathurst opened his lips, then he hesitated.

Coldly he asked, "Isn't that rather stupid, coming from you? You're not a stupid girl."

"What I mean is—does he hate me?"

"Probably. I would, if I were in his shoes."

"Oh, no doubt! Well, I hate *him*. I loathe him: I despise him."

"You made that much apparent this ——"

"The idea of his making love to me! Kissing me! Why, we spent half of last night under the cypresses. Can you *bear* it? . . . Did you know he's an Oriental?"

"I did."

"I—I could *kill* him! It's outrageous!" the girl cried stormily.

"Right! Filthiest trick I ever heard of. So unfair."

"Yes. Unfair."

"You should be thrashed within an inch of your life."

"I?" Alanna started.

"Certainly! Surely you don't hold him to blame? That Mongolian tiger didn't drag you out of the Casino and into that thicket, did he? I fancy not. . . . I'd like awfully to give you a piece of my mind, Miss Wagner, but I can't very well do so under my own roof."

"Please do. I came uninvited."

"Thanks awfully. I will. It won't help you in the least but it will do me a lot of good for I've heard nothing but you and Sam all this evening and

I'm full up. I'll merely repeat what I've already said. To put it politely, Miss Wagner, I consider you the most arrogant, the most ruthless, the most selfish creature I ever knew and I have so expressed myself. Thoroughly spoiled, of course. I don't approve of you at all."

"I gather as much," the girl said with a curious stare.

"You're vulgar and ill-bred and cruel. I'll wager you were one of those nasty little brats who pull kittens' legs just to hear them squall. You think it's clever to disregard everything conventional and to outrage all the decencies. You're utterly indifferent to other people's feelings. Really, I'm sorry your father isn't present but you may repeat what I say and he can find me any time."

"Go ahead," the girl urged defiantly.

"Righto! It's a pleasure I can't deny myself. We Europeans often spoil our women after they grow up but Americans seem to ruin them at the breast and you're a typical example. Look around you here in Paradis. Vain, overdressed, impudent, empty-headed women, as loud and gaudy and wasteful as macaws. It's the same all over Europe. . . . Imagine a girl of your age coming to a man's house, alone, at this ungodly hour, and confessing—*boasting*—that she spent half the night in a young fellow's arms! Thoroughly smart and up to date, no doubt, but it jolly well shocks me. I wish you were *my* daughter, for half an hour. I'd teach you what

a crop feels like. Sam Lee is a fine, clean, upstanding boy, and far too good for you. He held you at arm's length as long as he could and that drove you frantic. Oh, I saw the way you went at him! Disgraceful! Now you 'hate him'; you 'could kill him'! Well, you did something a damned sight more cruel than that."

"Yes?"

"You humiliated a proud, sensitive ——"

"What about *my* pride?" Alanna broke in, unable longer to restrain herself. "I'm a Californian. I was raised among Chinamen."

"Among coolies. Sam is a gentleman of breeding. His pride is stiffer, keener and higher tempered than yours, or mine, for he has something to be proud of. I have little and you have nothing —except your good looks. You see I don't bend the knee to your father's money."

"Are you through?"

"Not quite. It's rather sporting of you to let me speak my little piece before you rend me into tatters for I dare say it's the first uncomplimentary thing you ever heard about yourself, but—you've no idea what you've done to that boy. *I* can only guess but I fancy you've about spoiled him: certainly you've changed the whole course of his life. If he goes to the devil, you're responsible. It was an unpardonable thing to strike a fellow who couldn't defend himself, to break that particular kitten's legs.

It was wicked, inhuman and terribly unfair. Now, may I see you to your hotel?"

In a voice that surprised her listener Alanna said: "Just a minute. I'd like to speak *my* piece, first. I'm awfully mad—about the kittens. I never did ——! I *love* animals. I'd *die* before I'd hurt one. . . . The rest was true, except what you said about American girls. They're not all spoiled and selfish: you see only the ones like me. I know I was rotten. I came here to apologize to Sam."

"Oh, I say!" Bathurst exclaimed. "I'm sorry I ran on as I did."

"That's all right. I've known the truth about myself for ages. I'm like father's soap: it's highly scented and beautifully wrapped up, and the boxes are expensive and all that, but it's made out of scraps from the stockyards. That sizes me up: lavender and leaf lard, roses and refuse. I'm wild about Sam but that doesn't change the situation. It merely explains my actions. You see this is the first gate I ever found that was too high to jump: I suppose that's why I fell so hard. That's what drove me frantic."

"Do you honestly care for him?"

The girl nodded: her eyes were wide and dark with pain: her face was white and stricken. "When you've had everything, it comes hard suddenly to find yourself without anything. Smash! Bang! All gone! . . . I'm a smart aleck, because it makes people laugh. It's my principal accomplishment.

This serves me right." There was a pause, then the speaker inquired with an effort, "Did I—hurt him much?" At Bathurst's answer, she flinched as if he had struck her. "I'll never forgive myself, of course. If I hadn't cared so terribly I couldn't have done it. But—he hurt me and I've never been hurt. Everything came to an end so swiftly——"

"Has it necessarily come to an end?"

"Oh, positively! There's no way out! You playwrights make absurd things happen on the stage but in real life people have to be practical. They have to look facts in the face and live up to certain fixed rules of behavior, no matter how rebellious they may be. Most selfish women make good mothers, they're so jealous and so proud of their children. I wouldn't care very much what happened to me if —— But in marriage you have to look ahead: you have to play square with the children. Animals, too. No. It's a complete washout. I flew my own ship and I made hay wire of it. That's that. I'll end by marrying some bald-headed man with a whole page to himself in the Directory of Directors. When you see me grinning like an ape and cutting ill-bred capers you'll know I don't mean it. You can say to yourself 'There's a kid who cracked up.'"

"You're a good little sport," Bathurst asserted feelingly. "I apologize."

"Thanks. That thing about the kittens hurt like the dickens. Come, take me home, quick. I want to cry."

The New York newspapers devoted considerable space to the death of Lee Ying, Chinatown's richest and most influential citizen, and the stories were copied in San Francisco and elsewhere. Mott, Pell and Doyers Streets were in mourning and their residents prepared to pay the dead importer all the honors due to a person of high importance. His body, dressed in twelve white linen garments and resting in a splendid red lacquer coffin, lay in his princely home where hundreds of his countrymen came to view it before it was returned to China for burial in some carefully chosen spot. Religious ceremonials were under way, public rites and observances were to follow, for aside from his fabulous wealth, Lee Ying had gained a reputation for kindly deeds and his philanthropies were many. He had been a student, a sage and a philosopher, it was stated, and now that he had resigned his earthly dignities he was acclaimed as a model of those virtues and accomplishments most highly respected by Orientals. Already there was talk of a memorial arch to him.

The newspapers announced that Lee Ying's son, who had been traveling abroad, was en route home by the fastest ship, and was due to arrive in a day or so. This young man, Lee Sam, the sole heir to a royal fortune and the successor to a position of unique power in Chinese-American affairs, was a youth of university training and high culture. A delegation of his countrymen, local citizens of promi-

nence, had arranged to meet him at Quarantine. This was the same Lee Sam who had figured in the news of the day some months before and again recently in dispatches from the French Riviera. Gossip had linked his name with that of a prominent California society girl but their reported engagement had been vehemently denied.

Sam met none of his fellow passengers on his way home, for he remained in his stateroom and came on deck for a breath of air only at night when nobody could see the marks on his face and recognize him as the victim of that sensational affair at Paradis. A highly colored account of it had been in the Paris papers the day he sailed and it had stirred in him a resentment, a fury which no training in placidity, no serene philosophy of the far East could lessen. His cuts and bruises were sorest then, and so, too, were his feelings. Time failed to cure their smartings.

Hour after hour, he paced the floor of his cabin, or tossed and twisted on his berth, unable to erase from his mind the memory of his betrayal and his cruel humiliation. He tried to think only of his father, but thoughts of Alanna crowded in. When he visualized the image of Lee Ying it changed into hers, her figure jostled his. . . . Lee Ying was dying! He was calling for his son! The ship rolled and wallowed in one spot: Sam wanted to lash it onward. . . . Horsewhipped! Dishonored! Shamed! He could still see the expressions on those startled

faces in the tea garden. . . . No taboos, she had said. No race prejudice. The liar! All women were liars, thieves, cheats, blackmailers. How useless to urge this ship onward, faster, faster, when he could never run away from what pursued him.

It enfuriated Sam to be so ceaselessly concerned with his own affairs when his thoughts should be centered wholly upon that beneficent old man who had given him being. Fiercely he strove to hold his mind upon that high home which looked down upon the roofs of Chinatown: in fancy he walked with his father through its peaceful rooms and its gardens with their whispering fountains. . . . Fountains! Fountains were chuckling in the gardens of Paradis: the cypresses were stirring over his head: his heart was choking him, for Alanna's arms were around his neck, her lips were damp with his kisses. . . . Damnation! He was off again. Love was a meaningless word to her, it was an emotion as short-lived as the wake of a ship in the moonlight. . . . In God's name, what was this chasm that separated East from West? What was this biological barrier between the races? His blood and Alanna's analyzed alike, their skins were of similar hue and texture, their minds were one. . . . It was the same old riddle. He gave it up.

In mid-ocean came a radiogram that left him numb. He stared at it in anguish and in disbelief. Lee Ying dead? Impossible! But so the message read. That morning at dawn; in the hour of the

Tiger, he had gone on high. To the chanting of priests, the spirit of Sam's honorable father had set forth upon its perilous journey to the Nine Springs.

The young man locked his stateroom door and for once he ceased to "think white." The blows were falling fast now, his lucky star had set, his charms had lost their potency. His prayers and his lamentations were thoroughly Chinese.

It was a Chinese youth who met the delegation of yellow men which boarded the ship at Quarantine and onlookers wondered who he might be. They assumed, by reason of the respect and the deference shown him, that he was some visiting potentate from the Flowery Kingdom and they remarked upon a fresh red scar that ran down his face.

Lee Ying had left a letter to his son. He had dictated it to Eileen Cassidy shortly before his death and she handed it to Sam on the day after his arrival home. It was a long letter, through it ran a tender concern, a wistful yearning that moved the reader deeply. Even at the very last Lee Ying had thought only of his boy, his one regret had been that he must die without Sam's arms about him and his farewell message voiced that poignant disappointment.

"The scholar of small attainments is often mistaken for a philosopher when, as a matter of fact, his wisdom is only a reflection of that which others

have learned, and when his words echo the sayings of thinkers long dead," so ran the letter towards its end. "In my life I have discovered no solitary grain of truth, no single fruitful fact which has not been weighed and tested many times by men wiser than I. This is another manner of saying that the Tao—the Way—is a path worn deep by the feet of those who were guided by that supreme intelligence which we call inspiration. We follow its windings as best we can and if we blindly stray away from it we encounter thorns.

"You have strayed from the path, my beloved son, and it grieves me to leave you assailed by fears and suffering the tiger-gnaw of doubt, but my steps grow feeble and I must rest. You must push on alone. The bounds of my life have been fixed by Heaven, and the gods forbid me to guide you further. Know always that the path is there. Be warned by the thorns and the sharp stones that bruise your feet and seek for it.

"You fancy that you are in an unprecedented position. I shake my head, for that is not true. Nothing in the way of moral law is new, nothing in the history of human conduct is untried, no problem in correct behavior is experimental. No man can find himself in a situation which others have not met successfully. Ponder this. Remember also that when a man looks upon a woman's face he beholds all her children not yet born and that when a woman looks upon a man's face she sees only his

forefathers, dead long before she was conceived. It is better to become the prey of lions than to make the rabbit your prey.

"Now I must go. Vague fears assail me as the hour nears, for I was cast in a common mold, but I gain comfort from the words of one who experienced these same apprehensions more than two thousand years ago and who asked, 'How do I know that love of life is not a delusion, after all? How do I know that he who dreads to die is not as a child who has lost its way and cannot find its home'?"

"A last farewell to you, oh Heaven-sent jewel of my heart!"

Sam read, very slowly, this deep, spontaneous outpouring of paternal love and sympathy and he recognized it as more than merely that. It was a feeble effort to comfort him, a troubled admonition to be what he was and to beware of rebellion against the manifest designs of providence. He wondered what had prompted its tone and he asked Eileen.

"Your letters about Miss Wagner worried him," the girl said. "He read more in them than I did and—he was right. That dispatch telling about your trouble with her was a terrible shock to him, coming so near the end."

"Then—it was published here?"

"Oh, yes! It seemed to drain out what life was left in him."

Sam received this intelligence with Oriental self-control: only a heightened pallor showed that he was moved. Eileen realized for the first time how greatly her childhood friend had changed. She had always declared that Sam did not look Chinese, but she could no longer say so.

After a moment she ventured to continue gently: "We're so sorry, Sam: Mother and Father and Jim and I. We loved him. You're almost one of the family. You're badly broken up: won't you come and see us?"

The young man bowed gravely: he made a characteristic Chinese gesture with his clasped hands. "Your friendship honors me and I shall cherish it as a precious thing. Some day, perhaps —— Meanwhile, may I send you from China some gift that will serve as a symbol of my profound respect and as a reminder of my father's affectionate regard?"

"China? You're not going away again? . . . Oh, *Sam!"*

"It was always his wish to lie upon some happy hillside where his spirit would find delight in the beauty of nodding flowers, whispering pines, running water. We go together, the honorable and virtuous Lee Ying in his lacquered coffin made air tight against the malicious devils who nag the soul; Lee Sam, his undutiful son, in grief and repentance. . . . He will be carried in state to his final resting place upon some turquoise mountain slope. A thou-

sand hired mourners will follow him, to the strains of plaintive music. He will be buried with his inlaid chopsticks, with bowls of rice and cooked fowls and dried pork and with rolls of paper money. All things shall be done in accordance with our customs."

"'*Your* customs!'" cried the girl. "Sam dear, how queer you talk! You're not a Chinese. You're an American."

"Oh, no!" Over the speaker's face flickered an expression that chilled his listener. "I hoped to be an American. I tried to become one, but there were forces too strong opposing it. I was a fool. A fool who thought he could break a new path through the thorns. All things are ordered by the gods and this is one. I have discovered that there are voids between the races which are too deep to span. We may strain forward and reach out our hands but they can never touch and when we lean too far we tumble in."

"But—you don't believe in all those Oriental gods and those pagan superstitions. You're a college man. We grew up together and I know you better than I know my own brother Jim."

"I believe in nothing," he asserted roughly. "Every belief I ever had was destroyed. I believed in love and charity and brotherhood and all such pleasant nothings. Names! Words! Lies! . . . Hate and greed and bigotry are real enough but the others——? Bah! . . . My father was a noble

and a benevolent man: he practised all the estimable Christian virtues and yet he was despised by you white people."

"That's not so. I loved him."

Again Sam bowed. "I speak a general truth. You are one among many. The greatest Man of your race was crucified for being too loving and too lovable. I'm not of your race, Eileen, and I no longer wish to be. Lee Ying has made me proud to be of his. When I was a little boy in San Francisco I experienced nothing except kindness and courtesy and fair dealing from strangers. A Mandarin's button was placed in my cap and I was taught that three things only are honorable: nobility, age and virtue. Before I could talk plainly I was made to lisp, 'In a village of ten houses there is sure to be found loyalty and truth. Where a true gentleman lives there will be gentlemanly visitors.' I came here to your greatest city and I found only treachery and contempt. Scorn, derision, injustice, intolerance followed me through the streets. They followed me on to college: they followed me to Europe." Sam uttered an unpleasant sound. "The white friends, the 'gentlemanly visitors' whom I trusted betrayed me. My pals turned out to be grafters. I have never been betrayed by a Chinese. They never grafted from me. For example, I am going to China with my father's body and I plan to remain there indefinitely. His affairs, now mine, will be left in the hands of Chinese men. They will carry

on the business. If I return and demand an accounting I will receive it and it will be precise. Not a penny will have been taken by those 'dirty Chinks'.

"You know what happened to me at Eastern. I was innocent of any wrongdoing, but what of that? I was a yellow man. I was told that my train left at eleven. I was denied the privilege of pursuing the higher learning. In Europe it was about the same: as Sam Lee, a white man, however wretched and humble, I got along: as Lee Sam, the wearer of a ruby button, I was publicly flogged." The scar on Sam's cheek grew more livid at the memory. "You say it—it hastened my honorable father's end. I shall always hate them for that. I shall never masquerade again: I am a Chinese and henceforth I shall live as one."

A day or so later Chinatown paid its last tribute to Lee Ying, the well beloved, and all that was mortal of him began the long journey towards its haven of benevolent contemplation. With it, into the land of nine thousand flowers which lies west of the sunset, went Lee Sam, Son of the Gods.

CHAPTER XVI

SAM had been sincere in his statement to Eileen. He really did intend to make China his home, for a while at least: for a time long enough to recover from the blows that had been dealt him. Whether or not he would find it possible to remain there he was not sure, for he realized that his father's people would no doubt resent his "Europeanism" and that he would have to live down a prejudice on their part not unlike that which he had experienced in the Occident. On the other hand, they were his kin and as a people they revered culture.

His ideas about the Chinese, as a people, were more than a little hazy for, as a result of his father's teachings, he had idealized them, nevertheless he assumed they would be friendly to him. Lee Ying had not been the only noble, virtuous and broad-minded man of his race: surely, therefore, his son would be shown honor and respect.

It was a good deal of a wrench to think of giving up the country of his birth, apprehension smote him at the contemplation, and yet he could no longer tolerate its treatment of him. Lee Ying had always counseled a dignified resignation to the inevitable: for once it seemed as if Providence had

deigned to point the way of his destiny. Why struggle longer to be something that he was not, why try to gain a foothold where hands continually shoved him off? There was no good reason for doing so, and he told himself that when the august corpse of his departed father had been laid away in the happiest possible circumstances so that its restless spirit would not dwell forever in regions of gloom, he would begin his own life anew.

Sam found relief in this prospect for he was tired, he was broken, he was a prey to unending desires that he knew to be futile. China stood for peace, placidity, beatitude; it was a slumberous land, smiling sleepily in its dreams. Where better could one find forgetfulness than in the land of poppies?

In the weeks his journey occupied he strove manfully to make himself believe in the success of his experiment, but there were times when a terrible despondency overtook him: times when he raged at the injustice of his situation and dreaded the coming of his journey's end. What mockery, that a man so blest with the things other men desire should find them empty. What good were his youth, his health, his accomplishments, his riches? Thus far, at least, they had not purchased honor, fellowship or liking. And all because of an accident of birth.

Of course, China turned out to be nothing like Sam had pictured it. It was as strange, it was as foreign, it was as inexplicable to him as to the other Americans on shipboard who saw it for the first

time. Nor did it smile upon him, as he had expected; its face remained inscrutable and unfriendly. Sam felt more alien than any tourist. To these other visitors China was quaint, it was colorful, it was interesting, they "loved it." Sam hated it. Dismay and disillusionment struck him dumb.

The dirt, the reek of Chinese cities appalled him, the smells were sickening: the temples and the tombs which should have stirred his sleeping emotions, his racial pride, were mere curiosities: the people—his people—were stranger to him than anthropophagi. He would have enjoyed it all immensely as Sam Lee, the American, the white man: but as Lee Sam, the Chinese-American, he wanted to shriek.

Furthermore his father's people were no more foreign to him than he was to them. He spoke their language, to be sure, but as for attaining intellectual contact with them they remained as unsympathetic and as aloof as Eskimos. Such persons of consequence as he met were polite, accommodating; he was shown much consideration but he seldom saw the inside of their homes. His reputed wealth and his evident accomplishments made him a personage but he was eyed with curiosity and with distrust: nobody believed that he honestly wished to become one of them. He remained a sort of biological anomaly, a deviation from type, and obviously they resented him. In their opinion he had a half-breed mind and it lost him caste. This unwelcome con-

viction was borne home upon him in the course of time.

He lived at a great hotel, in a style befitting his means, but he perished of loneliness. He knew better than to seek company among its guests or among the white residents of the foreign settlement, for he had learned that the racial line was drawn even more clearly here than at home. Home? Yes, he thought of America now as home.

Even the children in the streets refused to make friends with him, and if Chinese children were as unmannerly as those of New York they would have made faces at him and showered him with stones, for to them he was exactly what he had been to the kids of Mulberry Bend Park. As it was they eyed him like owls and followed him only so long as he distributed presents among them.

Steadily he grew more homesick: he could not sleep: food nauseated him. One day a panic seized him, hurriedly he flung his things together and fled to the docks. It was no use: he was whipped. China had disowned him, stoned him out. Once again, in a raging fury, he locked himself into his stateroom.

None but a Chinese could have returned, after months of absence, to find his house in order and his business—a business as important as that of the Palace of Imperial Bounty—running smoothly, efficiently. Sam Lee did exactly that.

He came unannounced, but the stately residence

on the roof was as tidy, as spotless, as thoroughly aired as when he had left it. Its treasures were in place, not a speck of dust defiled the least of them. The caged birds were singing in the sun as merrily as ever, the fountain made its customary music and in its pool the same fat goldfish idled. The shrubs were trimmed, the soil at their roots was moist and mellow. Incense smoldered in the secluded shrine where old Lee Ying had paid obeisance to his gods.

At sound of their master's voice the cook and the two house-boys, friendly, adoring souls, pattered into his presence and kowtowed before him. They were the prey to soul-stirring emotions, their eyes were streaming, agitated words of welcome and of thanksgiving poured from their lips. Moy, Sam's valet, was even more deeply affected than they: an ague shook him, he abased himself, he stroked his employer and patted him, he laughed, he cried: like a shadow he followed him from room to room, voicing extravagant compliments. He addressed Sam as "Brother of the Sun and the Moon," "Upholder of the Four Corners of the World." For every hour Sam had been away the despicable Moy had endured a year of darkness. Tears had scalded his face and washed the sight from his eyes, but now he saw again.

Sam felt a stinging in his own eyes and a pain in his throat. Here was love and honor and dignity, here was his home. Other faithful friends were

waiting in the great bazaar to welcome him, already news of his arrival had sped thither and the place was in turmoil. It was on the streets of Chinatown, by now. These were his people: his wanderings were at an end.

His first act, when he had cleansed and robed himself befittingly, was one of filial devotion. Alone he entered the little teak-wood room where the joss sticks smoldered and knelt before the Messiah of his father's faith. On the wall beside the brooding idol hung a gold plate engraved with the legend of Lee Ying's name and to this he bowed his head.

"Beloved author of my being, in this hour of home-coming, to you I burn the incense of my unwavering devotion," he whispered. In hushed and reverent tones he addressed the august spirit of his father, acknowledging the latter's gracious beneficence and his own gratitude therefor. He reviled himself for his selfishness, for his lack of piety, earnestly he vowed religiously to observe the rituals and the ceremonials that devolve upon a repentant and unworthy son whose anguished soul cleaves to its parent and will not be comforted. Lee Ying's words of wisdom, the fruits of his philosophical meditations, Sam promised to cherish as so many jewels: always his flesh would be a sacrifice to the inspiring memory of his Celestial ancestor.

"My love shall renew itself day by day, for that love which ceases to grow is dying," he concluded. "Space is not space between the seen and the unseen

and remembrance is a form of meeting, so I shall always walk with you and feel my hand in yours. Sadness is no more than a wall between two gardens: my eyes are wet but I lift them and read the poem of your life written upon the sky. In me you fashioned an image out of ashes and breathed life into it, you whitewashed my faults with your virtues, and permitted me to wipe soiled hands upon your sleeve. You gave me jewels and I gave you silver, thinking I was generous, but great sorrows reveal the truth. Wisdom is not wisdom when it is too proud to weep. Help me, oh beloved benefactor, to sing the songs that have lain silent in your heart!"

For a long time he lost himself in melancholy reflections. Gentle, loving, wise Lee Ying! The white people had hastened his end: blows aimed at the son had stricken the father. Resentment blazed in Sam's mind like the flame in a chimney.

Enemies! So be it! His liking for them had turned to loathing. In their eyes Chinese were sly, rapacious, vindictive and untrustworthy. Very well, he would live up to that reputation: he would use them as despitefully as they had used him and his father. The weapons with which to do so were ready made: he was rich, he was a man of influence. Lee Ying's philanthropies in aid of their own countrymen he would carry on and add to, but aside from that he would use his riches and his power against those who had humiliated him and his parent.

Opportunities in this direction presented them-

selves as time went on and he seized them. With his own people he was easy and liberal, in his dealings with Americans he was hard. Chinatown had always looked upon him as an unusual person, but the gossip and the speculation he provoked had not been invariably flattering. Respect for his learning and his accomplishments was genuine but it had been tempered with distrust if not with actual resentment. All that quickly changed. When the people of Mott and Pell and Doyers Streets became convinced that the son of Lee Ying proposed to carry on his father's business as usual and to maintain, nay add to, that man's good works, he became enormously popular. Smiling faces greeted him, the blessings of health, happiness and longevity were called down upon him.

As the successor to a great fortune and the proprietor of an important business, Sam naturally became an object of interest to a number of people, some of whom were genuinely ambitious and some of whom were merely unscrupulous. A college-bred Chino-American in his twenties and without business experience was a target at which more than one professional promoter aimed a thrust. Cunning plans were laid to interest him in every sort of enterprise. Not all of these were unsound but Sam so regarded them and he took derisive pleasure in exposing their hollowness and in humiliating their proposers. In this he had some success and as a result the acid in him turned more sour. He gained

considerable satisfaction in dealing as harshly as possible with the white people he came in contact with and meanwhile his contempt for their shams and their hypocrisies grew. They were an avaricious race, nothing was sacred to them: their laws were oppressive and their justice was corrupt; their religion was a mockery and their virtue was as empty as a drum. As for himself, he heeded no restraints except those laid down by his honorable father's teachings and respected nothing but his own desires.

Mr. Carter, his attorney, one day spoke to Eileen Cassidy about the change in his client.

"Your hero, Sam Lee, isn't much like his father, is he? Lee Ying was one of the finest, gentlest characters I ever met, but the boy is harder than nails."

Eileen nodded. "Yes. He isn't the same fellow I used to know."

"It's a queer, racial atavism: in spite of all his education and his advantages he's more Chinese than his father was. He's charitable enough to his own people, he's even more popular with them than Lee Ying was, but he's positively malevolent towards everybody else. Sometimes I think he almost hates me and I'm sure he doesn't trust me in the least. His own lawyer!"

"Can you blame him?" Eileen inquired. "The white people have given him a pretty rough deal. I'd hate them, too."

"No doubt. And I'm sincerely sorry for him.

. . . Somehow I've never been able to think of Sam as a Chinese. I never forgot what his father was, for everything about him was Oriental. The boy used to be different. It never struck me that he had an Eastern mind. And of course Lee Ying always spoke of him so queerly: Son of the Gods! I never could make out what he meant. I asked him once but he didn't tell me much."

"How dreadful if he were really white," Eileen said.

"Um-m! But he isn't. Lee Ying was an honorable, a conscientious man: the one thing he dreaded most of all was that Sam would marry some white girl. No further danger of that."

Now that Sam was known to be in complete control of his own affairs, certain of his former college friends endeavored to capitalize their acquaintance with him and among the number was Kicker Wade. Wade came to see him one day and announced in his breezy, hearty way that it was high time he and Sam renewed the bonds that had united them at Eastern. He had been intending for some time to drop in and say hello to his old pal, but—you know! Sam certainly had been missed at the university. Dirty shame he had been fired. All that hooey over a frail! Colleges were the bunk, anyhow, and about all a man got out of them were his acquaintances.

Kicker was a stock salesman now and doing well. He was with one of the younger, more aggressive houses on the Street. Fine people! A fellow had

to be up and doing every minute to make good with a house like that and he was more than making good. But he wasn't too busy to remember old times. No, sir! The only lasting friendships a man made were the ones of his youth. He and Sam must see a lot of each other, beginning right now. And how was the old boy, anyhow? Well, well, it certainly was great to touch his flesh again. How was he behaving himself? Not so good, maybe, from what the papers said, but why shouldn't a guy have as much fun as he could afford? And how was his tennis game? . . . Too bad to let that drop. Sam had the makings of a champ in him and the chances were he'd have been on the Davis Cup team if he'd followed the game up. That back-hand of his put blisters on a ball and he had the fighting heart, too. Remember that team match with Princeton? *Some* match, wasn't it? Kicker would tell the strabismic world it was a match. And Sam had pulled it out of the fire for old Eastern.

Now Sam was a big man of affairs! Rich! Living like a potentate! Hot ziggity! That certainly was fine. Kicker ran an admiring gaze over the treasures of Sam's home, and whistled.

"What a room to throw a go-to-hell party!" he exclaimed. "Sound proof and too high to jump off. Say! I know a bunch of step-ins that would dress this place up like Altman's. I dare you."

Sam declined the suggestion with a shrug and a

smile. He wondered how much Kicker hoped to borrow.

Wade had not come to borrow, however, he had come to lay an offering upon the altar of that friendship, the memory of which raised a lump in his throat. Sam had been mighty generous to him and Kicker remembered it. Yes, sir. He wouldn't be where he was now if Sam hadn't helped him over those lean years at Eastern. Good old Eastern! And Kicker was one hombre who never forgot a favor. He wasn't in a position to do anything at the moment but he had something in mind and when a certain deal came off he proposed to pay Sam back a hundred to one. No fooling. . . . All right! All right! They'd say no more about it—for the time being.

Kicker rang up several times during the next week and chatted breezily. Sam waited. The game amused him. He was not surprised when his old friend came in person finally, much excited, vaguely mysterious. Wade began his business by stating cryptically that fortunes on the Street were not made by taking chances. No, sir. The little fellows took chances but the big insiders always played safe.

"We handle oil stocks, mostly, in our shop," he explained, "and when a proposition is better than usual we sometimes underwrite it. That's where the nourishment is: the public doesn't get its teeth into the good things until most of the juice is gone.

Understand? Well, we've got a sweet one, Sam, and I've put you in. I said I'd blow back ——"

"I never speculate, Kicker."

"Exactly. That's where you're smart. I wouldn't let you speculate if you wanted to. This isn't that kind of a deal: our group never speculates, it just divides profits. I'll tell you how it is; we've got an option on a big acreage in Texas, owned by some non-residents who are drilling a well. At least they think they're drilling it: as a matter of fact, it's down, finished, and they don't know it. The oil is there and the Standard will take the property at a figure that nets us a cool million and a half over our contract. The whole thing will be cleaned up in thirty days. I'm going in for what I've got and I'm taking this way to square my old account with you. You'll get a sure ten to one on your investment. Say, boy, you ought to know I'd die before I'd let *you* lose."

Sam was sure this was true. Kicker was indeed a genuine, an unselfish friend but Wall Street was a dangerous playground for an inexperienced investor. Of course if this deal was as sure as Kicker claimed —— On the other hand —— Doubt and indecision preyed upon Sam, he asked for a day in which to make up his mind. After more discussion, further explanations, renewed assurances of love and confidence, the friends parted. They wrung each other's hands at the door, Sam made the eight obeisances of brotherhood and Kicker's voice grew

husky, his eyes moistened. Good old Sam! Gee, it was great to be pals again! And about a party here in this penthouse, Kicker would guarantee to stage a board-walk beauty parade on a day's notice. A form-fitting riot that would have to be seen to be appreciated.

They met again on the following afternoon and Sam greeted his caller with an agreeable display of emotion. "It's nice of you to go to all this trouble, and it touches me. Friends have been mighty rare in my life, Kicker. A man without a friend is a brook without a source, a tree without a root."

"Exactly!" Wade helped himself to a cigar and to the easiest chair in the room. "About this deal: I don't want to rush you, buddy, but it's closing to-day."

"I was raised on proverbs," Sam continued. "My father used to warn me to guard my heart with the same vigilance as the ramparts of a city. In spite of the fact that your face warms me like the sun and your words of affection evoke in me a harmonious ecstasy, I nevertheless felt that I owed it to him to heed his admonitions. As a matter of filial duty, therefore, I investigated this proposition of yours, Kicker." Sam smiled queerly and Wade looked startled.

"Yes? Well, I guess you found everything O. K."

"On the contrary I found everything N. G."

"What d'you mean? *I* could have answered any

questions. I put you next to this in strictest confidence. Good Lord, I hope you didn't doubt my motives!"

"Fortunately for me, I did and I found them counterfeit, as usual."

"'As usual!'" The visitor paled and rose to his feet. "That's a nice thing to say to a pal. I don't give a damn what you found out, or think you did. It's boloney. . . . Humph! This is a sock on the button. It cures me of doing favors for a friend." He turned to go but Sam said:

"Permit me to tell you exactly what I discovered."

"To hell with your discoveries!" Kicker cried angrily. "I ought to take a wollop at you for good luck. I'm not used to insults ——"

"But you're going to hear a few, just the same. Bah! Don't bluff and bluster: you're a paper tiger and you always were. Times have changed, Kicker, I'm giving insults nowadays instead of taking them, and it's very agreeable. I investigated that firm of yours and they're swindlers."

"You're crazy! But—rave on, I'm leaving you. 'Swindlers!' That's a laugh." Wade uttered these words on his way towards the door but he halted when two Chinese men barred his way. They were thick-set young fellows and they stared at him from unfriendly eyes. "Hello! What's this?"

"Merely a couple of my servants."

"Don't you—intend to let me out?" the visitor queried in amazement.

"I intend to *throw* you out."

"What?"

"But first I presume I should call up Police Headquarters."

"Now see here, Sam ——"

"I know all about that oil enterprise. You said the well is down ——"

"It is. So help me ——"

"It has been drilled for three months and it's dry. And that option. Imaginary! . . . You're just what you were in college, Kicker, just a cheap grafter imposing on your friends."

"You can't have me arrested. You haven't lost any money, have you? All right! What have I done? I thought it was a good proposition, Sam. Honestly I did. You've got the whole thing wrong. Have a heart, old man. We used to be ——"

Sam uttered a command to his houseboys and they seized the caller. The latter protested furiously, he struggled, over his shoulder he shouted: "You rotten little skunk! I wouldn't—treat a dog —like this."

In spite of his bulk Wade was half dragged, half carried from the room and hustled across the entrance hall. He almost expected to be flung into the elevator shaft, but instead a door was opened, he was urgently propelled through it and a final shove sent him reeling down an iron stairway. With

a dislocating jar he fetched up on a landing half a flight below, the door above him slammed with a metallic clang. Wade was skinned and bruised, the metal floor upon which he sat was painfully corrugated.

He rose and slunk down from landing to landing, muttering the while. Sam Lee was a yellow dog. There was friendship for you! Served a white man right for being pals with a lousy Chinaman!

CHAPTER XVII

PRIOR to his divorce Albert Wagner had enjoyed a certain amount of home life but thereafter he had experienced little, and of late none at all. As a result he was beginning to yearn for it. That California estate of his was expensive to maintain and he loved living there, but during the past year he had scarcely been permitted to see it, for Alanna had kept him on the go and she had been content to remain in one spot hardly long enough for him to receive his mail. It seemed to the father that he was destined to spend the rest of his days in expensive and uncomfortable hotels and to breathe his last on a Pullman car or an ocean liner, for no sooner were they established at some pleasure resort than Alanna tired of it and insisted upon setting out for another, more deadly than the last.

If ever there was a stormy petrel, a pigwidgeon blown on the wings of a tempest, it was she and Wagner could not make out what had come over her. She made a thousand plans and changed them all. One day, for instance, she had refused to leave Paradis, the next day she had insisted upon leaving without a moment's delay: she had arranged to spend a season of gaiety in New York only to

change her mind overnight and decide on California. She had wired to open the house but after a feverish fortnight in the country she had proposed, nay insisted, upon a change to the city. And vice versa. Back and forth they had gone, now here, now there. Al Wagner voted it a dog's life.

But what can the father of a flibbertigibbet do about it? Refuse to go along with her? Leave her to fly off alone? Wagner knew his daughter too well, distrusted her too thoroughly and loved her too sincerely for that. He argued and he implored, he groaned and—he acceded.

Alanna was never twice the same and yet she had the power to wrap him around her fingers. One moment she was loving and lovable, the next she was harsh and hateful. She was obedient and rebellious, humble and domineering by turns and always she was as restless as some Peri doing penance until it could be admitted into Paradise. Today she was full of extravagant spirits, to-morrow she would be a brooding shadow, an aching complaint. Poor Wagner was distracted. He lived in a nightmare and thoughts of the future appalled him.

They were back in New York again, why nobody knew, and the girl was running with open throttle. The Wagner suite at the Ambassador was like a madhouse, maids and bell boys were on the run, some one of the several phones was constantly ringing with a clamor as irritating as a neuralgic pain.

Alanna's friends were as numerous as locusts, and more destructive; she and they were forever on the wing, settling only long enough to wreak havoc. Lunches, teas, dinners, dances, theaters, all night parties, polo, races: her hours were too short to accommodate her overlapping engagements.

Wagner had set out to keep pace with her for once and she had been delighted to have him do so. She had swept him along for a while, then spurred him on when he faltered and finally roweled him into a gallop until his breath failed and he dropped hopelessly behind. He was dead on his feet now, and in a constant drowse, despondency attacked him, in his wakeful moments he thought vaguely of suicide.

It was not often that he saw his daughter long enough to engage her in conversation, for she was always late—permanently late, as Wagner put it —for something or other, and she was seldom alone. Some male orchid was usually adroop over her shoulder, or some shrill-voiced neurasthenic of her own sex was shrieking at her to "make it snappy," "step on it," "give it the gun." The hotel suite stank of stale tobacco smoke and of expensive perfumes: ash trays were full of cigar stubs and mushroomed cigarette ends—the father called them "dead turkeys" and gingerly disposed of them—tables, stands, mantels, windowsills were lined with highball and cocktail glasses, empty siphons and mineral water bottles. From midday on, the place looked

and smelled and sounded much like some convention headquarters. When Wagner shut himself into his own rooms high-pitched voices, songs, shrill laughter, pierced the walls and his raw nerves quivered. He started convulsively when he was called and leaped out of his chair at the slamming of a door.

A little of this sort of thing was all right, but how these youthful hyenas could keep it up, week in and week out, was more than Wagner could understand. He grew very sorry for himself.

Occasionally there did come a chance for a word with Alanna, as, for instance, one night when she returned home about twelve o'clock. For once she looked exhausted, and her father was encouraged to believe there must be a limit even to her endurance.

"Well, well, well!" he began cheerily. "You certainly look rotten. In your dragging feet and haggard face I see hopeful signs of a physical collapse. How much longer do you think you can keep this up?"

"How much longer can I keep what up, jelly bean?"

"This—dementia."

"Bless you, I'm just getting up a comfortable glow. What about a kiss? Don't rise: I can make it." Alanna bent over her father's chair and pressed her lips to his hairless head. "What a nice, round smooth head you have, darling. It's just like a honeydew melon, only warmer."

"It will be cold and clammy if this continues," he sighed. "I'm up for the third and last time. Nothing but a string of bubbles will mark the spot where I sink. I don't know what's come over you, Alanna, but—you're getting more like your mother every day."

"That's probably the meanest thing you ever said about her. She'd hate you for it and I couldn't blame her. No matter how low she has fallen in your esteem, Albert, remember that you are a little gentleman."

"I wish you were an old lady. Aren't you *ever* going to settle down?"

"Horrors, no!"

"I wish one of these germs would marry you. I'd accept the worst one in the outfit."

"No danger. The more I consider matrimony, the better I like diphtheria. No, I shall never marry, precious sun-kissed canteloupe. I am content to remain at your side, a constant cheer and comfort."

"I don't know what I ever did to you," Wagner complained. "If you really want to cheer me, do it in a church. Comfort me with orange blossoms."

"Is it possible that I'm not wanted here? Cruel, cruel words!"

"It isn't that, but I've got my own life to live. I'm still young enough to have a lot of fun. I could start another past if I wasn't worried to death about your future and too worn out to make a beginning.

You've all but foundered me. Look at the way you carried on at home. You made a shambles of the place. We couldn't keep a servant more than a week: as fast as I hired 'em you fired 'em. You lost your own driving license and caused our chauffeurs to lose theirs. Even the horses shied at you. It was bedlam." The speaker flung out his arm in a jerky gesture, his voice became querulous. "You can't sit still long enough for a snapshot. Every place we go is terrible, deadly, unbearable. Here we are in New York again. For what reason, I ask you? Thank God, it's handy to Bellevue. What ails you, anyhow? What do you want? You've lost flesh, you look like a ghost, you don't eat. Why?"

"I'll tell you," Alanna confided with owlish gravity. "I swallowed a grasshopper."

Wagner uttered an angry exclamation, but she went on: "I want nothing but you, adorable fat beetle. All I crave is your love, your sympathy and your understanding: I yearn only to bring you happiness: to be your Mexican jumping bean. What ails me? Everything! But what is home without a hypochondriac? . . . How about a drink, keeper?"

Wagner leaped to his feet and strode about the room, followed by the almost derisive gaze of his daughter. Up to this point he had risen to her banter as best he could, but now a change came over him and when he spoke it was in an altered tone:

"I've an idea it's all due to that infernal Chinaman."

"Don't let's talk about him," said Alanna.

"Why not?" The father drew down his brows in a scowl: for a moment the two stared at each other.

In cool defiance the girl spoke: "All in favor of alcohol, signify in the usual manner."

Wagner breathed an oath. "Honestly, if I thought you ——"

"If you thought, you'd have wrinkles. Never think! Intellectual people age early and have their faces lifted."

"If I thought you cared for that Chink—I'd smother you with a pillow."

"Don't threaten."

"I mean it. I insist on your ——"

"Please!"

"Put him out of your mind or, by God, I'll shake him out of it!"

There was a pause. Without rising, Alanna reached forth her hand, lifted the telephone and called a number.

"What are you doing? Who are you ringing at this time of night?"

"Sam Lee," said the girl.

Albert Wagner gasped, he moved as if to snatch the instrument but Alanna turned her shoulder, her eyes widened, an expression leaped into her face that

warned him to keep his distance. Of a sudden she had grown as white as paper.

"You—know his number! You've called him before!"

She nodded. "I looked it up when we came from Europe, and I've repeated it to myself a hundred thousand times. I called him, but he had gone to China."

"What are you going to say to him?"

"I don't know. If you move or make a sound, I'll tell him to come and get me."

"Alanna! For the love of Heaven——!"

"Smother me with a pillow! Shake it out of me! I warned you not to threaten. . . . I—I want to hear his voice. I want to know he's there. I was half crazy when I came in and you . . . Hello!"

Through the silence Wagner heard a faint, metallic answer.

"Is that you, Sam? This is Alanna." Again silence. "Alanna Wagner. Al for allez oop, anna for anatomy: W as in winegar, h'a as in hay wire, g as in jelly— . . . Sure! V-o-g-n-e-r. Pronounced 'Beethoven'. You haven't forgotten me already, have you? How impolite! . . . Oh, that explains it! But why sleep at this hour? Sam, you've been dissipating." The girl laughed hysterically, she was shaking, her face was strained, her eyes were wild. . . . "I don't know why, I'm sure. I never have a reason for doing things. Impulse probably. I want to see you. Yes, that's it, I want to see you.

. . . But—there's something I must say. . . . Father and I have been quarreling over you."

Wagner shuddered, he felt a moisture start out upon his body.

Alanna went on, utterly heedless of him now:

"Oh, not a serious quarrel! Just our usual bedtime battle. Nothing like a few fast rounds to make you sleep. . . . Please, Sam. . . . Why? Because I ask it. Isn't that enough? . . . We're at the Ambassador. Please! . . . Any time to-morrow. Whenever you say. . . . Thanks, old dear. I'll expect you."

"Oh, my God!" the father exclaimed feebly.

"Now don't turn for comfort to religion," Alanna told him with a wintry smile. "There's no help there. At least I'm not surreptitious, am I? And don't lose your beauty sleep, for nothing is going to happen, if you'll promise to be a good boy. He knows and I know it's—just one of those things. Only don't nag me. But I *must* see him. I can't go on like this. For one thing I want to apologize; for another thing I want to—— Oh, hell! I want the moon but I'll get along, somehow, without it." The speaker rose wearily and made for her room. Over her shoulder she said in a syrupy voice: "Good night, sweetheart, and happy dreams. Sleep tight."

That midnight message shook Sam and he slept no more after its receipt. When morning came he

experienced a peculiar indecision: he looked forward with dismay to seeing Alanna again and yet the thought of doing so set his pulses to racing madly, stopped his breath. He had been unwise to consent: it was wicked of her to insist upon his coming for she must realize how it would torture him, but— . . . What had induced her to phone, anyhow? What had occurred to change her? . . . Quarreling with her father over him! Sam grew dizzy: the wildest thoughts leaped into his mind but he dismissed them without delay. Nonsense! No change in her could alter the facts. It was an impossible situation, and she must know it as well as he did. . . . Of course, she knew. This was merely some whim, some yearning for a new and unfamiliar thrill. Well, he wouldn't go. . . . And yet she had begged him. She was capable of anger but not of deliberate malice: perhaps she really had something of importance to say. To change his mind now would be a confession of weakness. Torn by unruly desires, hot with resentment, cold with dread of the ordeal, he spent the morning in a restless pacing of his rooms.

When the hour he had set arrived he went swiftly, eagerly, as he had known he would go. He could no more resist going than a man in pain can resist an opiate even though he knows that it will eventually result in added suffering.

Sam had named a time when the hotel lounge was likely to be least crowded and at his request

Alanna met him there. Had he been less agitated when she came down the change in her appearance would have shocked him, for she was thin and drawn, there were ghosts in her eyes.

It required courage on her part to meet him but, as usual, she came to him as straight as an arrow in its flight. She put an icy hand in his and she met his gaze bravely. He was unusually pale; through his pallor the old mark of her crop stood out like a scar and for a moment she could not see anything else. Alanna had suffered a hundred punishments since that afternoon in Paradis but none had been so poignant as this. Resolutely she apologized, abased herself, told him how sorry she was and begged him to forgive her. He bowed, he smiled stiffly and assured her it was nothing.

It was the worst experience either of them had ever endured: when it was over they seated themselves and exchanged commonplaces. Sam had come here in a peculiar state of suspended will power; now that he beheld Alanna he had the odd sensation of being two persons. Two men at this moment were inside his skin and each was trying to push the other out. One was cold, satiric, self-contained, and he was the stronger; the other was a weak, impulsive, hysterical creature, utterly untrustworthy at the moment. He required watching. It was the first of the two which inquired politely about Alanna's health, her doings, her father's well-being.

Only for Sam's inward struggle, his painful pre-

occupation with himself, he surely would have noticed the girl's wistful yearning, for her self-possession was like a mask of gauze. As time went on, however, she managed to assert better control over herself and to take refuge behind an artificial flippancy. But the effort spent her and when she fumbled with a cigarette her hand shook so that Sam proffered her his jeweled lighter.

"Thanks, old darling! The mineral water is terrible, these days, and the orange juice isn't what it was before the war. I must have pulled a tendon in my pitching arm last night."

"Yes?"

The girl nodded. "We were in a night club where they serve cocktails in teacups. I spent the evening throwing unbreakable china. It was wearing."

"I assume you go out as much as ever?" This was not what Sam wanted to say but it was the Number One man speaking. The Number Two man was beating his hands and wildly calling Alanna's name.

"Um-m, yes. Father says it's as much as ever that I come in. That's hardly just for I'm seldom late for breakfast. Why, Sam, I broke a solemn engagement to see you and do my penance—— Oh, don't go! For the first time in a long while I'm in good company and it's helping me. Tell me something about yourself and your plans."

" 'Man has a thousand plans for himself, God but one.' " The speaker smiled faintly. "I am

something of a fatalist so I cultivate an enjoyable tranquillity. When my eyes become tired from staring at the sun I shut my senses and allow time to crawl along. Life is a tortoise: I sit upon its back and dream."

"I phoned you the day I returned from Europe, but you had gone to China."

"I went with the remains of my father. It was a painful duty but I laid them to rest in the happiest spot in all that country."

"I gathered, somehow, that you intended staying there."

"So I had intended. But China wouldn't have me. Certain metals can't be made to fuse, you know, and it's the same with certain racial elements. It seems to make no difference whether they're inherited or acquired."

"I presume that's true, but I wouldn't think it applied to your case." Sam explained how it did apply, and the girl nodded her complete comprehension. "What a pity! How unreasonable it is—all this prejudice. And yet how real."

"I've spent my life trying to arrive at the reason for it."

"Well, facts are facts, old dear. No use bruising our heads against them, eh? We engaged in a great experiment, 'noble in purpose,' and it failed, like prohibition."

For the first time Sam began to suspect that this

girl was perhaps as unhappy as he and a panic swept him at the thought. He had never dreamed ——

That strong man inside him was saying, casually: "China had a sick stomach for me and I have a sick stomach for America. It looked on me as a sly, avaricious, insincere Yankee; here I am regarded as a wicked, untrustworthy Oriental. What is a fellow going to do about it? Having failed to live up to the good opinion of either, I shall live down to the worst of both."

"Atta Mandarin!" Alanna exclaimed. "Life's a rotten counterfeit: if you take it in fun it turns out seriously: if you wear a long face it snickers at you. But ask me if I care. Sleep late and have no regrets: dance to fast music—there'll be enough slow music when you're dead. . . . I suppose you'll marry some cute little Chinese girl. They must be charming."

Sam managed to say, "If I loved her, yes. One lives up to his appointed duty in such things."

"Love! Another sham!"

The young man spoke with more feeling now than heretofore. "You don't honestly believe that, Alanna."

"And why don't I? It's supposed to be a consuming passion: it dares all, it endures everything, it overcomes everything. Bosh! Cupid is a naked, timid, shivering little wretch. I hate him!"

"No. He's only sensitive. In old China silk-

worms were hatched in the warmth of women's bosoms. The life in those tiny, nestling cocoons is so tender that disquietude or discomfort of the woman sheltering it may kill it. Love is like that."

Alanna was staring fixedly at her companion; she roused herself and abruptly changed the subject. "Dad was in the room last night when I called you and it threw him into complete mental and digestive disorder. He's out yonder now, foaming like one of Wagner's Velvet Shaving Sticks. Funny, isn't it, how parents will clutch at the wheel and risk ditching the whole family? They're all back-seat drivers."

"I would be honored to have him join us."

Alanna shook her head at this. "Repentance is a chastener. Besides, this is probably the last time we'll ever see each other, so don't let's break up the meeting in a row."

Albert Wagner was indeed outside and he felt precisely as if he were riding in the back seat of his daughter's car. He was convinced that she was driving with suicidal recklessness but he dared not interfere. He had spent a night as troubled as she; now like a restless wraith, he hovered in the background, angry, irresolute and sickeningly apprehensive. He longed to stride into that room where the young people were and put an end to this affair, once for all; several times he was upon the point of doing so but wisely restrained himself, realizing that it

would only serve to incite Alanna to some wilder folly. Sam Lee's presence here merely went to show how futile was opposition. What a disposition for a nice girl!

He knew he should go back upstairs, or out into the street, but he found it impossible to do either: every time he started for the elevator or for the door his feet turned him back: he could not resist stealing glances in the direction of the lounge and he fought the impulse to hide behind something and stalk the pair. He bought a newspaper and buried his apoplectic face in it, he chewed savagely at an expensive cigar until it gagged him. He flopped into one chair and then another only to rise and stamp about with his fingers interlocked behind his back.

The average outraged father would shoot that heathen down, Wagner reflected. But, to give the devil his due, Lee wasn't really to blame; this was all Alanna's doings. Of course, one might lurk outside until the fellow left and then shove him under the grinding wheels of the Park Avenue traffic. . . . But probably the scoundrel was too nimble for that. Damned clever, these Chinese. And besides, the red lights would be sure to come on at the wrong instant. They always did.

As a matter of fact, if Mr. Wagner had overheard the conversation between the two young people, as he longed to do, he would have felt much easier in his mind, for they held the reins tight. Alanna

maintained her flippant pose; Sam remained artificially polite and casual. So far, at least, the girl pretended that this meeting was a voluntary penance on her part, and nothing more; he gave no hint that he suspected otherwise. It was a painful game of make-believe and each realized that they were saying farewell, hence they were slow in bringing it to an end.

"On the night you left Paradis I went to Cyril Bathurst's place and waited for him," she announced in a desperate effort to prevent a pause which might induce Sam to go. "He may have written you about it." Sam shook his head. "That's probably because he told me exactly what he thought of me and couldn't bring himself to repeat it. He misunderstood me, of course, as everybody does. I'd like you to understand, before we turn the page, that I'm not quite as bad as I appear."

More gravely than he had spoken heretofore, Sam said: "I have never misunderstood you."

"I'm glad. I think that's why we hit it off so well. You don't think I'm altogether selfish, arrogant, and unfeeling, do you? Or that I'm a wretched coward?"

He shook his head. "May I tell you how you appear to me?"

"Please do, only don't start by saying I'm spoiled. I know that."

"You were made to dance through life, laughing

at your hurts and saying little about them. You're rich in many things but there is a finer fortune than money or beauty or position and it is yours: the fortune of blitheness, amiability, virtue ——"

"Amiability and virtue don't go together, sweetheart. That's why so many of us honest girls walk home."

"We Chinese speak of virtue in a wider sense. This fortune of yours is so much more than money! The swifter you spend it, the larger it grows. Your heart is neither wise nor cynical: it's the heart of a little play-with-dolls-girl. . . . There's an old Chinese story about a spoiled goddess whose name was Willful. She was the daughter of Prosperity God—a very powerful person—but Willful ruled him like a tyrant and made him indulge her lightest whim. About all she ever said was, 'I will! I will!' and usually she screamed it. One day, a good many thousand years ago, she decided to come to earth and visit China, of which she had heard a great deal, so she slipped away unseen and scampered down a rainbow bridge of birds and butterflies. That's how all goddesses come and go. Of course, her disappearance created a great scandal: all sorts of things were said about her up there 'on high', for Chinese gods are gossipy.

"But no evil overtook her. She played among the lovely wild white roses of China and romped through its bamboo groves—and really, nothing in

Heaven could be more beautiful. A good many mean things are said about Chinese gods and goddesses sometimes, but one thing sure, they are never ungrateful. Even the most insignificant one invariably says 'thank you' for the slightest favor. Gratitude, you know, is a Chinese trait.

"Wherever little Willful met with kindness from human hands she said 'thank you' by causing grains to grow more luxuriantly, vines to hang heavier, and flowers to flame with brighter colors. It's too long a story to tell, but finally our great Goddess of Mercy who had been watching the little runaway girl-goddess all the time flung down another bridge of birds and butterflies for her homesick feet and Willful went back to her father, who was very glad indeed to see her."

A silence fell between the two when Sam finished speaking. Realizing its danger, he rose, his face still fixed in a smile. "The butterflies are waiting to take you back to your father, Willful. An earth-bound mortal prostrates himself and gives thanks for the blessings you have left behind. Good-bye!"

Grief looked out of Alanna's eyes as she put her hand in his and murmured through trembling lips:

"Good-bye, virtuous Prince. I wish you long life, honor and many sons."

Without moving she watched him go, then she rose, went swiftly upstairs and locked herself into her room. For two days her father neither saw

her nor heard her voice. Meals were brought up and sent back untouched, her telephone rang unanswered. But Wagner knew she could not be sick for whenever he knocked on her door she threw something at it.

CHAPTER XVIII

SAM'S valet, clad in a well-fitting suit of American clothes and carrying a derby hat, stick and gloves, paused inside the door of the living room and bowed. When his employer looked up, he bowed again and his broad face broke into a smile. When Moy smiled other people smiled, too, for he was a sunny little man, there were humorous wrinkles about his eyes, his lips were made for mirth.

On duty Moy wore bright-colored silken house suits with tiny round caps to match and he spoke only Chinese, but he had been studying English of late and when he fared forth into the city on his own business he put on his newly acquired "white" language along with his "white" clothes. This being his evening off, he had stopped on the way out to ask if there was anything further his employer desired.

Sam assured him that he was quite comfortable, nevertheless Moy lingered. He smiled, he looked grave, he twisted and he cracked his knuckles; finally he blurted out,

"My work for you long time now."

"Yes. It's a good many years, Moy."

"My glad when you glad, my sad when you sad."

"Right."

"You honnable father all time good to Moy. Sure t'ing! My go to hell him an' go to hell you, Mister Sam."

"I'm certain you would. . . . Is there something you want to say?"

The little man nodded and puckered his face. "You very sad. My kill myself to make you happy."

"That's wholly unnecessary. Just go out and have a good time."

"You like good time? You like laugh?"

"Of course I do."

"You come 'long me an' you have good time. Very funny." Moy voiced this invitation hopefully.

"Where do you go every Thursday night?" Sam inquired curiously. "It's none of my business but —you always dress up: I never hear you come in."

"'My don't come home until morning.'" The speaker sang these words lightly and chuckled. "That's funny song, honnable. 'Nother song say, 'Show me some way to go home.' In China is no song like those. You like dance? . . . You like white arms full of love?"

"White arms——?" Sam stirred, he shot an inquiring glance at his valet. "Do you know any white women?"

"Oh, plenty! Nice keeds. Hots mammas! My have practise American dancing carefully: you come 'long an' have enjoyous evening with pretty ladies."

Sam declined with a gesture, but he questioned

Moy further and learned that the latter spent most of his spare time, and practically all of his money, in the Asiatic dance halls. White girls were great dancers, according to Moy, and there was a peculiar excitement to the American dance due to the manner in which it was executed. All of his friends patronized the dancing places and many had either married or were supporting girls whom they had met there. Moy explained naïvely that the girls took more pleasure in dancing with Oriental men than with men of their own race because the former paid more liberally for the privilege. He confessed that he had been pretty lonely and more than a little dissatisfied with American life until he had learned to dance, but now he was far from discontented. Sam really should come and see the pretty ladies, hear the music, amuse himself: the spirit of his venerable father must be sorely grieved at the life his son led. While it was the duty of the living to do obeisance to the departed, to sob at their graves and to worship their scrolls, it was not a mark of respect to forego all pleasure. It was, in fact, a disrespect: it was positively unbecoming and undignified in a superior person like Sam. Custom decreed that a man in his position should avail himself of every expensive earthly enjoyment—a failure to do so bespoke lack of gratitude for Celestial benevolence, and ingratitude was a vice. Women had been provided by Heaven for the entertainment of men, and Sam's illustrious forefathers had

profited by that wise provision: they had taken wives by the score, concubines by the hundreds. He owed it to them, as well as to himself, to maintain the high standard of deportment they had established.

As for these white girls, a person of Sam's importance could make them his slaves, he could steep his higher senses in the perfume of their beauty. There were girls with azure eyes and tawny hair and pallid skins, dark girls with red lips and ebony brows! They would crawl at his shoe.

No white men patronized the places where Moy went, and there were other places, more expensive, where could be found the very flower of white loveliness: girls fit to grace the palace of a king. The insignificant speaker could not afford more than occasional visits to these exclusive dancing establishments, but Sam could afford it. His house was silent, cold, whereas it should be filled with laughter and warmed with love. Yearning arms were outstretched, snowy bosoms panted for a sign of his lordly condescension.

All this took time to tell and much of it was far beyond the range of Moy's limited command of English. Sam listened with a queer light in his eyes: he surprised his employee finally by rising and saying he would go. The little Korean was all but delirious with joy.

That proved to be a strange experience for Sam: he felt as if he were on an Arabian Nights adventure

and he would have given much if he had been able to see it through the eyes of his valet. To the latter it was romantic and pleasurably exciting; to Sam it was hollow, incredibly sordid and shocking. The sight of white girls in the arms of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino men evoked astonishment at first and then resentment. It was an abnormality that he found deeply repugnant and yet he could not tell why. His white mind was working again, no doubt.

Moy took him first to a place on upper Broadway. It was about like any other public dance hall except that all the men were Asiatics. The dancing floor was fenced in by a railing with turnstiles at which ticket takers were posted: between dances the girls rested on benches inside the enclosure. There were three men present for every woman and although Moy had said that nothing except soft drinks were served it seemed to Sam that the patrons were all drunk, for they laughed, chattered, shouted, waved their arms and rushed about in an extraordinary way. The meaning of this disorder was not at first apparent, then it dawned on Sam. The place was run in a manner to excite the animal emotions of these yellow men and to maintain them at fever heat. The music was loud and spirited, the girls were receptive to attentions, and many were dressed in a manner to advertise their tantalizing charms. Their gowns were light, of necessity, but some were semi-transparent. Moy called them "see-through" dresses and gleefully pointed them out. His round

face was beaming, his eyes sparkled. Neither corsets nor girdles were worn and dance hall custom, it seemed, decreed roll-top stockings. The short skirts in vogue afforded to the tired Asiatic business men glimpses of bare knees and soft white flesh when the girls sat down.

Contact with the yielding bodies of these coryphées provoked their saffron partners so swiftly that the dances were cut short. They lasted only four or five minutes and the intermissions even less. As a matter of fact, the orchestra stopped playing barely long enough for the floor to be cleared and for more tickets to be collected. These tickets were ten cents each and were sold in books. Moy explained that the girls received five cents a dance and that some of them made as much as ten dollars a night—just from dancing.

During the brief interruptions in the music the place was a riot of sound, outside the railing the patrons milled like restless cattle. Before the excitement could abate appreciably the perspiring musicians resumed work and the gates again were stormed.

Ten dollars a night. Two hundred dances. Sam wondered how many miles these girls covered in an evening. Fortunately for them, the modern nautch dance is not exhausting.

But this was not a dance, it was a Corybantic frenzy, an orgiastic revel cunningly held in check. It offended Sam to see these men—men of his very

own race, some of them—tantalized and titillated by these avaricious foreigners. It was indescribably cheap and somewhat nauseating, but his respect for them did not suffer as did his respect for white womanhood. He knew American women were low but he had put a higher price on them than ten cents.

Of course his presence became known. Soon there was a craning of necks, the girls stared at him in open curiosity and talked among themselves. The proprietor of the hall, a meticulous Japanese, presented himself with a bow and expressed his appreciation of the honor Sam had done him. He was servile and flatttering, he offered his distinguished visitor the freedom of his so miserable establishment and volunteered to procure for him any girl who suited his fancy.

Sam thanked him and explained that, for to-night at least, he was only sight-seeing. This was his first visit to a public dance hall. Curiously he put several questions which were answered frankly.

Yes, this went on every night. Police? Why should the police make trouble for a licensed dance hall, open to the public and run in strict observance of local ordinances and the prohibition laws? It was an orderly place and white men were welcome, although, happily, they did not patronize it. Investigators, policewomen occasionally visited the place and a few young girls had been arrested on complaint of their parents, but most the girls had their

parents' consent to work here—some even brought their mothers along. And why not? The work was easy, the pay was good, they were treated with more courtesy here than in the average American dance hall. Asiatics were free-handed with white women and what a girl did outside of this place was no concern of the proprietor. Would not Mr. Lee accept and use a book of tickets? A dozen books? Some of the girls were pretty. Many were agreeably young. . . . No? The speaker shrugged and nodded. He understood perfectly, a gentleman of Mr. Lee's consequence must exercise discretion in the pursuit of his amusements.

"To you I will present select address," he said, "where matters will be found more agreeable to your liking. Surroundings are more rich and satisfactory than of here and the management is correct. Polite young ladies of the non-shopworking classes can be met and the music is of excellent organization." On a card he wrote a Riverside Drive number and this he handed to Sam.

Curiosity prompted the latter to drive uptown to the address given; it was that of a handsome private house. He and Moy were admitted readily, from the floor above came that same tempest of voices they had heard in the first place and upon mounting the stairs they beheld a similar scene. This was a "club," however, hence it was furnished and run on a more pretentious scale than the public hall. The revelers were better dressed and no attempt

was made to separate them between dances, but otherwise the procedure was about the same. There was the same turmoil and the dances were equally short.

Here, again, Sam was recognized and a good deal was made over him. When, at a late hour, he returned to Chinatown it was with a deeper feeling of disdain for the white people than he had ever experienced. Christians! His superiors! It made him laugh bitterly. They presumed to scorn him: a woman of that race had whipped him. What a cocksure attitude!

Sam did not like to remember that it was Alanna Wagner who had humiliated him: since their last meeting he no longer thought of her as the one who had actually struck those blows. It pleased him to reason that her hand was merely the hand of her people and to realize that she had bled with him. Alanna, as he saw it now, had been only an instrument, a handle to that whip which Nordic prejudice had swung. In his mind of late she had become a symbol, rather than an individual: she was more than a white woman, she was Woman herself. She was the very core of that womanhood which mothers every race. She was the essence of his desire, their souls were mated, but fate had shackled each to a body which the other was forbidden by some taboo to touch. They had been caught and crushed into the dust by the same creaking, antiquated juggernaut. It was a peculiar form of provincialism, this

contempt for foreigners, especially inasmuch as these Americans were not pure blooded. They were a mixture of many strains and without any definite racial tradition that compared with his. But what good did it do to harbor rebellious thoughts?

Always he would burn incense to Alanna as his divinity; it occurred to him now that he could ease the pain of his blistering want by embracing the shell of white womanhood if not the reality. These girls who had fawned upon him to-night were blood sisters of hers and he could touch *their* bodies. He could take any one or all of them: it might numb his suffering to hurt them as he had been hurt. He could possess them, use them, deride them and cast them aside. There was comfort in the feeling of power which came over him at this thought.

His smoldering resentment was blown into a blaze a few days later when his lawyer called on what he announced to be an extraordinary errand. Mr. Carter was indignant and he explained his feelings by saying:

"You remember that fellow Himes who had a part in the Mona Stevens affair?"

"I'm not likely to forget him," Sam declared.

"Well, he has turned up again. He came to see me to-day on behalf of —— You can't guess."

"I shan't try."

"That Hart girl! The girl your father sent to Paris."

Sam stared incredulously at the speaker. "On

her 'behalf'? What has happened to her? Perhaps I'd better say what does she want?"

"You've struck it. She doesn't want much. She merely wants to marry you."

"Are you joking?"

"Those are the very words I put to Himes. He tried to look offended and to tell me he was acting wholly upon instructions, but of course it's his doings. It seems they met over there and became fast friends; however, he was honest enough to confess that he resented your father's rough treatment. A plain case of malice."

"Still I don't get what you're driving at, Mr. Carter."

"Alice Hart is back here in New York and threatens you with a breach of promise action. Blackmail, of course. Settlement out of court."

"Is there another 'child'?" Sam's lips curled.

"No. The young lady isn't trying to force that issue. Pardon my levity. The statute of limitations runs against babies in nine months, you know. There's no hint of wrongdoing, in the usual sense: she's just a shy, shrinking, country girl who trusted in your protestations of love and relied upon your promise to wed. Did you ever write her any letters?"

"No doubt."

"Himes referred to several which breathed poetic devotion of an exalted and embarrassing nature, also to pointed attentions, expensive gifts —— He says

you entertained her for a week or more at a New York hotel and that she visited your home."

"All true."

"There's no denying the fact that your father sent her to Paris and footed her bills up to the time of his death. Himes contends that a jury would construe such an action as due to the interest of a prospective father-in-law. I dare say if you had continued to foot those bills we'd have heard nothing from her. It's all rot, of course, and there's no cause for concern, but I'm tired of seeing you shot at by snipers."

There was a peculiar light in Sam's eyes when he said: "Miss Hart is a very charming girl and I was more than fond of her. What's more, I would have married her gladly. I infer that she has analyzed her feeling for me and discovers it to be love."

"Analyzed your bank account!"

"Anyhow she consents to become my wife."

"She does more than consent. She demands."

"Very well. I'll marry her."

For a moment Mr. Carter stared at his client as if waiting for him to finish this questionable pleasantry. Sam smiled imperturbably.

"As I was saying," the lawyer resumed, "it's an absurd demand and not made in good faith. I advise handling it without gloves. No quixotic notions, understand: forget she's a former sweetheart and leave her to me."

"But wait! I flattered myself that I have charm: you destroy my illusion by assuming that the young lady is animated purely by selfish motives. I prefer to believe that love, not greed, moves her."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Put it this way: Miss Hart is a white girl, she is young and beautiful and talented. She is willing to marry me, a Chinaman, and become the mother of my children. My honorable forefathers never saw their brides until the unveiling whereas I have basked in the radiance of this woman's smiles and my heart was a thief at sight of her. I have thrilled at her beauty of soul and body ——"

"Don't talk gibberish. . . . You're surely not in earnest?"

"You say she's after my money. All right. I never dreamed I could buy an American wife. Of course, my ancestors bought their women as you buy cattle. They took several wives, as a matter of fact, and there's a manifest disadvantage in being limited to one, love is so fickle. But times change. On the whole, I must say that Chinamen then seemed to fare as well under their system of blind selection as you Occidentals do now in choosing your wives with open eyes. After all, one wife is about like another. Remember, I'm an inferior and offensive person: a naked worm, a putrid stench in the nostrils of your people. This jewel of your superior race, this intoxicating creature stoops and lifts me in her arms—white arms, full of love. She

raises me to her perfumed bosom. Shall I deny myself that ecstasy? You ask too much."

"You can get white women without marrying them, if that's what ails you," Carter said stiffly.

Without heeding this remark, Sam continued: "The honorable Himes plays the part of mai-jen—what you'd call a matchmaker—so the affair takes on a real Chinese flavor, doesn't it? Assure Miss Hart, through him, that her gracious condescension makes me her servile and obedient vassal for life, it overwhelms me with undeserved happiness. Say that only an illustrious scholar could find words suitable to describe the ecstatic emotions I experience at this honor. Promise her that she shall be the proud mistress of my three-roofed house, that she shall wear robes spun from shimmering moonlight and eat delicate foods from the thinnest of imperial porcelain bowls. A hundred docile servants shall bow to her —— But no, my ardor runs away with me. Tell her merely to come and see me, so that my heart may speak its own message."

"Come *here?*" The attorney looked incredulous.

"Oh, the illustrious mei-jen may come with her! He should do so. He's the one to discuss the wedding arrangements, the bridal settlements and such things. A quaint and amusing custom, isn't it?"

"You'll get yourself into trouble if you take this out of my hands," Carter warned with some heat. "Frankly, I'm not sure just how much you mean and how much you don't mean—you've been acting

so queerly. Anyhow, she wouldn't have the nerve to meet you."

"Then, alas, I would be forced to doubt her sincerity. The issue would be left open and she could not go to court. Am I right? . . . Very well. You have only to state that I insist upon dealing directly with her. Tell her, if you please, that I have lost faith in lawyers."

"Humph! I believe that's a fact."

"Good! Let's conduct this delicate negotiation in all frankness and honesty."

Mr. Carter left in a good deal of a huff.

Sam's message, as relayed by his attorney, was not wholly pleasing to Everett Himes, but Carter declined to do more than repeat his client's demand, so an appointment was finally arranged and on the afternoon set Alice and her companion appeared.

Moy, smiling, roguish and benign, admitted them. He was in a purple pongee suit and he ducked and bobbed deferentially: having seated the callers in the reception hall he trotted away on his noiseless felt soles. As he opened the carved door into the living room they heard a high-pitched, sing-song female voice and the plunking of a Chinese banjo, the which abruptly ended when the servant appeared. Moy was gone for several moments, several voices sounded.

Miss Hart, who was under a high nervous strain, rose and peered furtively through the half-open door, then she motioned to Himes. Sam Lee was

sprawled on a couch at the far end of the room. He was in a magnificently embroidered robe and one languid arm was around the waist of a shiny-headed Chinese girl. Another girl, who held a thin-necked stringed instrument in her hands, sat cross-legged on a cushion: both were in loose Oriental jackets and pajama-like trousers, both were giggling and tittering. The visitors retreated noiselessly to their chairs.

Alice was both shocked and offended: she sniffed suspiciously for she had become aware of a peculiar, sickly-sweet odor which permeated the entire place. "What's that queer smell?" she whispered.

"Don't you know?"

"Is it——?" The questioner's eyes dilated.

Himes nodded, laid a finger on his lips and motioned for silence. A moment then he cautioned softly: "Understand, now, I do the talking."

Alice faintly signified her assent.

Moy returned, he bowed them into his master's presence: Sam Lee had risen from the couch and he invited them to be seated. He took Alice's hand and kissed it, he ran his gaze over her and in a voice unnaturally thick and queerly disconcerting he began a ceremonial speech of greeting and of welcome to his miserable, his undignified dwelling. Miss Hart's attention was divided between him and the two Chinese girls who had retreated across the room and were pretending to look out of a window into the roof garden. They stole occasional glances

over their shoulders, clung nervously to each other and exchanged embarrassed giggles. With their calcimined faces and carmined lips, their long jackets, embroidered trousers and tiny slippers they looked like two pretty little Oriental dolls. Their hair was stiffly pomaded and pierced with an appalling number of stickpins and jeweled ornaments. Bangles hung at their throats, on their wrists were many bracelets.

Sam quite ignored their presence and continued to shower his visitors with compliments in what seemed to be a flowery set speech.

Alice noticed something else, too. On a tabouret beside the couch was a queerly shaped pipe, a peanut-oil lamp and other articles which evidently went with them. An opium layout! The fellow was drugged. That accounted for his behavior, for his heavy-lidded eyes and his sensual smile. Yes, and for the presence of those simpering creatures with the shoe-button eyes. Opium smoking was accompanied by bestial orgies. No wonder he looked at her in a way that made her flesh creep: his very gaze was an affront and it left her with a feeling of nakedness.

Everett Himes was speaking now, he and Sam were saying something about that Stevens girl, but there was no rancor in their voices. Good Heavens, how Chinese Sam had become! And what a change in this place since that night long ago. For the moment Alice Hart's mind reacted only to physical

stimuli, to sights, sounds, smells. So that was opium. It was breathless and hot in here. That's how the drug affected people; it didn't make them drunk, but ——

Sam at the instant was overriding some protest of Himes'—something about refreshments. "I insist," he repeated in that queer, thick voice. "On an occasion of this sort it would affront my household gods to ignore the ceremonies." He clapped his hands and called out something to Moy. "The best I can offer will be tasteless and unsavory but ——"

Himes interrupted in a determined effort to take control of the situation. "Miss Hart is pretty nervous. She didn't want to come here but I prevailed on her. This is a matter of some delicacy and you understand my position in it."

"Perfectly!"

"I'm just a friend of hers. I thought Carter and I could ——"

"No, no! Lawyers and undertakers are melancholy crows. Who would have a raven at a feast? In China when a man of means arranges a marriage or the purchase of a concubine he invariably treats with a go-between. Your presence immeasurably lessens my embarrassment."

Alice Hart stirred and uttered a sound. "This is —something we can't discuss in public." She turned a meaning glance towards the Chinese girls.

The master of the house waved an indifferent hand. "Oh, don't mind them: they understand no English. They are merely my posture girls, my playthings. Pretty little dolls. I bought them in China." At a word from him they came running and knelt at his feet. He said something more, they nodded and tittered, they hugged themselves. "They consider you very beautiful."

"I—suppose they're your affair," Himes said with an effort. "I'm used to such things but Alice ——"

"We don't seem to be getting anywhere," that young lady broke in, more nervously than before.

Again Sam smiled, almost leered, at the speaker. "Patience! We have time. Somewhere, I understand it's in Suez, there is a gravestone with an inscription that reads, 'Here lies a man of the West who tried to hurry a man of the East.' Let's sip our wine, exchange compliments, fling peacock feathers back and forth."

"This isn't the time or the place," Himes asserted gruffly. "What is it, yes or no? You asked her to marry you—am I right? . . . She wants to know what you propose to do about it."

"I have enough evidence to convince any court," the girl asserted.

"But why speak of courts, my dear? You long for me, I yearn for you. I bound forward with a shout. Marry you? Well, *rather!*" Once more

he spoke, in some excitement, to the Chinese girls and they uttered thin squeaks of delight and chattered something to him. "See! It pleases them, also. You fill their hearts with joy and they surrender first place in my affections to you. They'll be like sisters to you, Alice."

"What the hell ——?" Himes exploded. "Are you drunk?"

"With happiness, yes. All my life I've wanted a white woman. The thought sets me wild. We Asiatics pay high for what we want and marriage is a cheap price for —— *Alice!*" Miss Hart had risen with a strangled cry, but Sam leaped forward and clutched at her.

"Let me go!" she gasped, and tried to shake him off.

"Never!" he drew her to him and his face was ablaze. "I'll marry you to-day, this hour ——"

"Let her go, d'you hear?" It was Himes speaking, and he, too, had risen.

But Sam ignored him, hoarsely he ran on: "I'll smother you with jewels, with love, with passion ——"

"Let me—go, you—beast!" Alice struggled, her eyes were frightened, her face was distorted with loathing.

"My arms are hungry for you. I'll make you forget you're white ——"

Himes seized the half-demented youth and flung

him aside. "Alice! Wait!" the latter pleaded wildly. "If it's these girls, I—I'll send them away. I'll find another home for them. I'll promise not to see them often. For God's sake, don't look at me like that! I'll be good: I won't touch you until to-night. See! I'm calm! It was only a frenzy at the feel of your flesh. I'll be your slave, this home will be yours, I'll choke it with the richest treasures."

Miss Hart had found her voice and hysterically she reviled him. Himes was storming at him, too, but Sam only raved the louder. The "posture girls" screamed and cowered, for a moment there was a pandemonium of voices. Alice ended the scene by suddenly turning and fleeing from the room. Himes followed her, cursing; he overtook her at the door to the steel stairway. She was sobbing and her knees shook, she cast terrified glances over her shoulder and refused to wait while her companion rang for the elevator.

When the pair had gone, when that metal door had clanged shut behind them, Sam shouted to Moy, saying:

"Open the windows, quickly, and air this place out."

The sing-song girls, his Oriental slaves, flung themselves upon the couch and rolled in convulsions of glee. They shrieked, they kicked, they hugged each other, and he joined in their laughter. One

of them managed to gasp from the depths of the cushions,

"Oh, Mr. Lee, you're wonderful!"

"I surprised myself," he admitted.

"'Alice! I bound forward with a shout!' 'Posture girls!' He bought us in China. Wouldn't that slay you, Iris? Do you mind if we tell father and mother?"

"Of course not. It was nice of them to let you play in my little comedy. Burlesque, rather. I wonder that those people swallowed it."

"Why, they swallowed every word." The second girl was speaking now and wiping her eyes. "I thought I'd die when Hyacinth tried to play that banjo. And that opium! It was worth all the trouble to learn what the stuff smells like."

"Yes, and to wear these darling costumes," the second sister agreed. "Gee whiz, what fun!"

"Will you permit me to send them around to your home, along with the bracelets and the hairpins and everything?"

"Oh, no!" . . . "They're much too valuable." . . . "Father wouldn't let us," the girls protested.

"I beg of you. They'll come in handy for some fancy-dress party at your school. I'm sure it would please your parents to see you in old Chinese dress. I shall apologize to them in person for bringing you into contact with a degraded white woman, and now—could you bring yourselves to tackle that cere-

monial repast which I ordered for my other guests? I didn't think they'd stay."

"I'll say we could tackle it." . . . "Gosh, we're starving!" exclaimed the girls.

Late that night Sam went alone to the house on Riverside Drive.

CHAPTER XIX

RENEGADE is not a nice word but the time came when Sam took a certain satisfaction in applying it to himself. He was indeed a renegade, a deserter, but he assumed no blame therefor inasmuch as he had been drummed out of his own camp for an offense of which he considered himself guiltless. Harsh treatment had destroyed all his liking for, had perverted all his faith in, everything American, everything white, and having been forcibly fed on nothing but indignities it pleased him now to give his self-styled "superiors" a taste of his diet.

Of course, there was precious little comfort to be had out of passively hating a whole race, but a good deal could be derived by actively venting his spleen against certain members of it. He was already at war with white men: his last experience with Alice Hart induced him to widen the scope of his hostilities so as to include white women. It struck him as unmanly and unbecoming to revenge himself upon the weaker sex as such, and he did not undertake to do so, but the women he had known were, for the most part, mercenary, avaricious, depraved creatures and he took a malignant satisfaction out of exploiting them and exposing their vices.

They pretended to scorn him, they shrank from his touch, but they did not scorn his money. All right, it was his cheapest possession: he proceeded to use it in humiliating them as they had humiliated him. Furthermore, he made sure that his despised countrymen got the full worth of their money, too.

Sam became a regular and an extravagant patron of the Oriental amusement places. He became the prince of spenders. The girls did not interest him greatly for they were ignorant, coarse-fibered creatures and mere physical beauty is intriguing only for a short time. Some of them had a sort of moral character, he discovered, or what passed for such, and they took pride in their so-called virtue. Virtue, however, is a much abused word. In their mouths it was wholly unrelated to honesty, kindness, piety or the like: "decency," according to their standards, involved lies, deceit and trickery of numerous forms. The best of them were conscienceless grafters.

Heretofore they had been able to handle their good-natured and excitable dance hall partners about as they chose, but Sam did not permit them to handle him in any such manner. Prompted by his example and aroused by his derision, his fellow Asiatic amusement seekers took on the masterful ways of American men, with the result that the "club" on Riverside Drive and other resorts like it became nightmare places to the women who went there.

Sam's loyalty was wholly racial, he assured him-

self, and yet for some reason it still angered him to see white girls in bodily contact with yellow men. It immeasurable degraded them, to his way of thinking. He tried to tell himself that quite the opposite was true but here again he collided head-on with his Western training, his acquired prejudices. It was another clash of those old cross-currents, he supposed. What ailed him, anyhow?

The occasional marriages, of which he heard, actually shocked him: here was a positive abnormality, as he saw it. The women, of course, were rapacious, unmoral and wholly undeserving of wifehood, nevertheless he felt something akin to compassion for them. Miscegenation meant ostracism: their own people scorned them, as did their husband's people. They became mere legalized concubines. And what about the children issuing from such unions?

He asked this question of a Filipino one night and received information that amazed him. Yes, children were a problem, the fellow agreed, especially among men whose pay as house servants and the like was small. Living expenses in New York were high, as were hospital bills: and it certainly cost money to have children. But fortunately, there was a simple way to get around that. Many Filipinos, and Japanese, too, none of whom shared the Chinese reverence for children, had their white wives sterilized.

Sam stared at the speaker uncomprehendingly.

Oh, it was easily done! It was an expensive operation, but cheap in the long run for it enabled the wives to go on with their work either here or elsewhere. Consent? Sam's informant laughed, in some amusement. The women never knew what was going to happen to them: they were merely sent to the hospital—a certain hospital—on some pretext or other and when they came out from under the ether it was all over. There was an Asiatic surgeon in the city who was skillful at this particular work. The practice wasn't universal, but it was common enough. A good thing, too: it saved feeding a lot of hungry mouths and besides, who would want a houseful of half-breeds?

So this racial repugnance which the white people jealously cherished recoiled upon certain of their own. Vice did not prosper them: greed, indolence, depravity led them into deeper sin and the race suffered. Good! It served them right. Here was something to gratify Sam's malevolence.

Entertainment was in full swing, excitement was high in the place on the Drive one night when Moy searched out his employer and found him on one of the upper floors. This was not Moy's night off and Sam was surprised to see him, but the Korean explained that he had been forced to come.

A gentleman had called up Sam's house on the telephone an hour or so before and had insisted upon speaking with him. Moy had said that his honorable boss was meditating and could not permit

his thoughts to be disturbed. Then he had politely hung up. But the stranger had called him back again, not once but repeatedly, and had voiced blasphemous remarks about Sam's meditations, about Moy's command of English, his intellectual attainments and the degraded character of his ancestors. The man was both uncomplimentary and unrefined. Moy had told him to go to hell.

After a lapse of time the person had appeared in the flesh: he had stormed into Sam's house, shattering its dignified repose with loud profanities and strident demands for immediate audience with the owner on a matter of life and death.

Moy had assured the caller in the best selected language of his deep sympathy and had comforted him with the assertion that both birth and decease are inevitable and should be accepted with composure, not with unbecoming voice-bellows and wipings of brow-sweat. He had then admitted the truth that Mr. Lee was not at home.

But the person would not be comforted. He had roared louder, he had become red, he had swollen. He had finally given Moy a hundred-dollar bill and begged him immediately to lead the way to his employer. He was below at this instant. Had the avaricious souled valet acted wrongly in yielding to the stranger's entreaties? Of a certainty the man's distress was touching, if one could permit himself to be sympathetically moved by the overextravagant emotions of a fat white person.

"Who is he?" Sam inquired.

Moy looked blank. American names were so outlandish.

Sam rose and went downstairs. In the ballroom, staring with amazement and incredulity at the scene before him, stood Albert Wagner. Sam could not believe his eyes.

Wagner's face was haggard, it was bloodless, new lines had bitten into it. When Sam spoke to him he started: he mumbled a hoarse apology at intruding. His expression was one of mingled loathing and entreaty as he said:

"I've been looking all over—— I've got to see you alone."

"I assume it must be something important or——"

"Alanna's sick. Terribly sick. She——" The speaker's voice failed him: the words stuck in his throat. "She's calling for you."

Sam closed his eyes. Through the blaring of horns, the din of frenzied voices, the scuffling of feet he heard Wagner imploring him, "For God's sake, come with me! It—won't take long. Hurry, please, or—— I'm afraid she's—dying."

On legs that threatened to give way under him Sam followed the older man down and out into the street. A car was waiting and into this they hurried.

Sam inquired through numb lips, "What has hap-

pened? Why does she want to see me? What can I do?"

"She doesn't know she's calling for you. She's delirious. Rest assured I'd never have looked you up if it wasn't necessary! It came hard, I can tell you. But I'll pay you liberally: you can have—anything." Wagner was too distracted to note the sudden stiffening of his passenger. "My God!" he groaned. "It was bad enough without this."

Sam spoke in any icy tone. "Don't torture yourself. I don't like you any better than you like me."

"Oh, I don't mean to offend you, but—you know how it is! I merely want you to understand that she doesn't know what she's doing. When people are out of their minds like that they're liable to—to do anything. That's what the doctor says."

"Perhaps you'd better tell me what happened to her."

"I don't know exactly. She's been hitting it up, running wild, for months. I couldn't do a thing with her. I just—worried. I suppose she wore out, burned up: anyhow she collapsed, all of a sudden. That was several days ago. I didn't think much of it at first. . . . Oh, it has been hell, standing around, unable to do anything! I'm about all in. Of course I got the best doctors, and a couple of nurses. Some time yesterday—I think it was yesterday—she began—er—somehow your name popped into her mind. It stuck there. Not that it means anything ——"

"I understand."

"Well, the nurses began to ask who Sam Lee was, and if I couldn't get hold of him just to quiet her. She doesn't know what she's saying any more than a parrot: she hasn't mentioned your name in months. Not more than once or twice since we left Paradis. Anyhow the doctor seemed to think —— I—I'm acting on his orders, see? He said he often had to humor people with brain fever, give 'em what they wanted. A doll, or a cat or a dog or—anything. Sometimes they call for people they scarcely know. Just a sick fancy." In a sudden fury of resentment which indicated how near he was to the breaking point, Wagner cried: "Believe me, it was a bitter dose! Going down to Chinatown! Begging, bribing that grinning ape of yours! Chasing you from one dance hall to another. You've got even with me for what Alanna did to you. . . . What's that dive where you were? God almighty! I didn't think the police —— . . . Well, here I am asking a favor of you. It's hell, that's what it is." Wagner leaned forward and took his head in his hands.

Sam spoke, as coldly as before. "Pan-ku built the universe in fifty-one stories. Thirty-three are heavens and eighteen are hells."

"Huh? What?"

"You have touched only the uppermost hell. I've been through all of them."

For a while the two rode in a silence broken only by an occasional incoherency from the father and

by his heavy breathing. "To-night's the crisis. The doctor says ——"

"So! You let it go as long as you dared."

Oblivious of Sam's words and his tone, Wagner talked on.

"—through till morning she'll be all right. Or if we could get her to rest; to quit muttering, even for an hour or so. . . . They don't know who you are—the doctor and the nurses, I mean, and I didn't tell 'em ——"

"Don't worry: I won't tell them, either. And you needn't fear that I'll presume when she recovers. I appreciate your embarrassment and I shall try not to add to it, either to-night or later."

Wagner was plainly relieved, but the next instant he broke out in a panic: "She's all I've got. I can't lose her." He wrung his hands and rocked his body. "I—I'll pay you anything, Lee. I'll bless your name."

"How can a hand be raised in blessing if it is filled with gold?" the younger man inquired.

A nurse met the two men as they entered the Wagner suite: she said there had been no change, she and the father left Sam alone. From the direction in which they had gone came a voice which the younger man did not at first recognize as Alanna's. It was throaty, flat, it droned along monotonously. Sam strained his ears but he could make out no words, all he could hear was an expressionless, un-

ceasing rivulet of sound, the very quality of which affrighted him.

The nurse reappeared, after a few minutes, and beckoned to him; on tiptoe he followed her down a short hall and into a bed chamber. Near the window a doctor and a second nurse were whispering with Albert Wagner: when Sam appeared the doctor moved to the bedside and spoke in a natural voice.

"Here he is, Miss Wagner. . . . Alanna! Here is Mr. Lee. Don't worry any more: he has come to see you. . . . Sam Lee! Don't you understand? He's right here in the room." The sick girl continued to mutter.

Sam's breath lay still in his lungs, he gazed at the flushed face on the pillow a prey to emotions suitable only for his soul to experience and for the gods to see. Anguish and compassion peered from his eyes. At a motion from the physician he moved forward to the latter's side, but Alanna did not recognize him: her lips babbled: her expressionless stare was terrifying. As the doctor ran on, repeating Sam's name over and over, the girl frowned in a troubled manner, her hands moved restlessly. Sam lifted one of them in his and it burned him.

"Speak to her," the physician directed. "Perhaps the sound of your voice——"

"Alanna!" Nothing is more appalling than a vacant mind, the total blankness in Alanna's glassy, unfocused eyes aroused a terrible fear in the speaker,

and a desperate yearning to aid her. His voice issued strongly but tenderly from his aching throat. "*Alanna!* Wake up, oh Thousand Pieces of Gold! I'm here and your hand is in mine. Don't worry any more, dear. I heard you calling and I came to you. Alanna! Sam is here."

Her hot fingers closed over his, and pulled weakly at them, her free hand groped in his direction: she uttered a peevish complaint. One of the nurses whispered:

"She wants him to hold her. . . . Put your arm around her, Mr. Lee."

"Try it," the doctor ordered.

Sam turned a white, tortured face towards the father, who closed his eyes and nodded. "Your pardon," the young man said.

Alanna's head rolled, she cried out fretfully and lifted her arms. Sam bent lower and they encircled his neck, he felt her feverish cheek touch his. Promptly he forgot everything else. A wave of tenderness swept over him, gently he seated himself on the edge of the bed and took her to his breast. He murmured to her in a tone softer than any caress and she breathed a sigh of contentment, her lids drooped, closed.

The nurse who had spoken before deftly readjusted the pillows and the covers, then whispered:

"Hold her as long as you can, and keep talking to her. It's the first time in twenty-four hours that

her tongue has stopped. Don't let her begin again. It burns out her vitality."

It is doubtful if Sam heard the admonition. Until an instant before he had been keenly aware of these strangers in the room and above all of Albert Wagner's presence. Some hand had throttled him. But in the agony of this heartbreak he forgot them all, he and Alanna were alone.

Dazedly he asked himself what punishment was this that the gods had put upon him. Were they utterly implacable? But thoughts of himself were less than momentary: this suffering wisp of a creature in his arms was being tortured, too: she had endured flames hotter than his. Pity dissolved him. Poor little scorched wild rose! Brave little white rose! She had faced the fire until it withered her: she drooped now and perished for the dew. She found coolness only in his touch and his tears alone could quench her thirst. . . . Punishment? This was no punishment: it was reward! Do not the spirits who dwell in perpetual bliss envy man his pain? The compassionate gods had smiled upon him finally, they had given him his hour. Yes, and they had given him work to do.

Heedless of listening ears he spoke to those that were deaf, and some faint echo of his voice must have reached the wandering mind of the sick girl for it paused. She hearkened. Very quietly the doctor and the nurses withdrew: they put their

heads together; apprehensively, and yet with growing relief, they looked on.

Alanna had strayed a long way and she was very tired. Sam strove to rouse her, to lead her back. It was a task, however, almost beyond his power. Realizing her desperate need for aid he called upon his father and his gods for help.

He was not aware of praying: in reality it was less a prayer that he uttered than a cry for assistance—a Chinese cry—and certainly it was unlike any prayer these other people had ever heard. He spoke to the girl and through her to that benevolent person who had never failed him in his hours of need: he called to the powers beyond. He implored Kwan Yin-ko, Goddess of Mercy, the one Celestial being who is faultless, to show compassion to this child as she had shown it to that little girl-goddess long, long ago when China was young. In a way Sam was repeating that story he had told Alanna, striving thereby to arouse her sleeping memory. Like Willful she was lost and crying for her home: she was bruised and faint but she was young, the sunshine loved and kissed her passionately and her runaway journey was at an end. The gentle goddess had woven, for her bleeding feet, another bridge of bright-winged birds and butterflies.

Kwan Yin-ko! China! Girl-goddess! The physician and the nurses exchanged startled glances. They stared at Sam with a new and fascinated interest. Albert Wagner huddled in a chair, his elbows

on his knees, his face hidden. He knew now, beyond all doubt, what had driven Alanna to this extremity and the most terrible part of it was that Sam Lee knew, too. This China boy! This yellow man! She was lying on his breast. Smiling! At rest! He was coaxing her back, helping her along the path. It was something these doctors and nurses, not even his own love and tenderness, had been able to do. But—the fellow was an outcast, a leper. He smelled of the pit. An hour ago he had been holding other white women in his arms—despicable harpies! Alanna's face touching him. Feebly the father rocked his body.

Now and then Sam spoke in Chinese: that was when his mind, his boy-mind, unconsciously sought the deep-cut channels fashioned in his youth. Pan Yi, his little Chinese mother, had taught him his first lisping prayers: invariably when his thoughts turned Heavenward he spoke in the tongue he had learned at her knee. He talked feverishly, continuously: he dared not stop for he knew now, as did the others, that the sound of his voice was the one, the only thread to which this girl clung. It was thin and it was strained to the snapping point.

Alanna's body lay quiet enough, but Sam was aware that her mind was a long way off and unable to grope its way back unaided. It was dark out there: she was over the hill and she heard him only faintly. The shadows confused her: she longed to rest. In his love alone could she find stimulation and

so, in a thousand ways, he told her of it. He called to her tenderly as his Silver Tulip, his Priceless Vase of Satsuma, his Exquisite Fragrance of Hyacinth. She was the flesh and the soul of his desires. Her voice was the laughter of tinkling silver bells stirred by the joyous wind. This was not his boy-mind speaking now, but the poet-mind of an anguished Chinese lover. Gentian-winged swallows and ruby-throated hummingbirds circled above her head: safe beyond the beat of storms she rode upon a rose and gold and ivory tinted cloud which bore her homeward.

He summoned the spirit of Lee Ying from its bamboo groves beside the bright Celestial streams and implored it to lead this truant Willful back to earth.

Sam had never dreamed that the chance would come to voice his yearnings: he knew them to be futile but, like the nightingale that pierced its bosom with a thorn when it sang its love song, his ecstasy at this moment was greater than his pain.

The younger of the two nurses, the one who had directed Sam to take Alanna in his arms, listened intently. She thought it all very beautiful and affecting. This handsome boy whose eyes were wild with want, this pitiful spoiled girl whose need was so acute, were lovers: unhappy lovers. Here was romance and tragedy: and how he loved her! It is every woman's dream to be loved like that. How touching of him to call her his Ray of Golden Sun-

light, his Exquisite Wild White Rose. Surreptitiously the nurse blew her nose.

A considerable time passed, then the doctor spoke cheerfully to Albert Wagner saying:

"Well, I think I'll pop off to bed. I'm pretty well done up. She's sleeping and there's nothing more to worry about. You'd better get some rest, too."

An hour later when Sam left the sick room he found Alanna's father waiting for him. Wagner mumbled certain awkward words of gratitude but he received a wintry smile.

"Don't thank me, sir. What little I did was not done for you."

"All the same, you've got to let me show my appreciation. Hell's bells! I can't stand obligation. I'd go crazy owing you for—for a thing like this. You've got me down, with my face in the dirt. I'll give you every dollar I've got."

Sam winced, then his face hardened unpleasantly. "Money! Money! It buys everything, doesn't it? It makes everything easy. Well, I can afford to pay as high as you, so let's make a bargain. I'll give you all I've got for Alanna! . . . That hurts, eh?"

"That's not the point. You misunderstand me." Wagner struggled to express himself, "I can't bear to be indebted to anybody, and to you of all persons. Damnation! Didn't I drag you out of a brothel to bring you here? . . . Then I had to sit still while you held her. I had to listen to you——"

The speaker smote his hands together and began to curse impotently.

"He who gives you a serpent when you ask for a fish may have nothing but serpents to give." Sam uttered the quotation evenly but of a sudden his voice changed, it grew exultant. "She's asleep at last. She has come home. I brought her back. *I*, the man you despise. She wanted me! Do you think you can pay me for that?" He opened the door and passed out.

It was daylight when Alanna awoke: that young, romantic-minded nurse was in the room.

"Gee! I feel as if I'd been awfully sick," the girl said faintly.

"You have been sick, dear, but you're all right now."

"I had a dream: the most—wonderful dream."

"Yes, a wonderful, a beautiful dream. But we won't talk about it yet. Go to sleep again, if you can."

Alanna wondered drowsily why there were tears in the nurse's eyes.

CHAPTER XX

EILEEN CASSIDY arrived home one evening, late for dinner, and as she scurried up to her room her mother called after her from the dining room:

"Change your dress, dearie, somebody's coming after supper."

"Who is it, ma?"

"Never mind. Put on that new blue thing and look your best. Make haste for I want to clear off the table and everything's getting cold. Of course, you'd be late the one time I'm in a hurry."

Eileen slipped out of her street dress, scrubbed her face and hands, then put on the "new blue thing," muttering the while. Callers! Of course, they'd have callers tonight. A hard day at the office brought visitors as sure as hot weather brought rain, and they'd hang on till it thundered. This meant she'd have to do the dishes, and blue spots so easily.

"Sorry I'm late but I had to go uptown after I quit work," she explained when she seated herself at the supper table. "Who's coming, and why? I'll bet it's some of the family."

"Your cousin Peter Daly is in town."

"Peter Daly? *My* cousin? Who is Peter Daly?"

"Well, my cousin," Mrs. Cassidy said. "Peter went West before you were born. He was here this afternoon and he's coming back to see Dan and you and Jim."

"He'll have to wait up late if he sees Jim. I haven't seen him in a week."

"I remember Peter well," Mr. Cassidy announced. "He was on the Force in Frisco the last I heard of him."

"Isn't it funny that we never hear from our relatives while they have jobs? He must be in dire distress to look us up. Gee! Ma can go further West for her kinfolks and dig up the sorriest specimens ——"

"Peter's a prosperous man," the mother asserted. "He's on his way back to Ireland for a visit and he's sailing to-morrow."

"Ticket all bought?"

"Of course. He's a ——"

"Glory be! What a relief to meet one with carfare. He's the first one to claim kinship with us until driven by want. Usually it's 'Hello, Dan! Hello, Sheila! You're a sight for sore eyes, the both of you. How long since we saw you? Twenty years? *Tse! Tse!* And us living on the next street all that time.' Ten minutes of Irish folk-lore and then the family prayer, 'Give us this day our Daly bread.' The Cassidy and the Daly blood is thicker than glue. Take it from me, if Cousin Peter has a dollar in his pocket, he borrowed it."

Mrs. Cassidy was offended, she rebuked her daughter. "And who are you to be so snooty? It comes with bad taste from you to be Ritzing your relatives. Where would we be if ——? And, by the way, that's a thing I want to speak about. Malachy Daly, God rest him, was Peter's first cousin and he knew him better than I did. I was bragging about our good luck and he ——"

"About our legacy?"

"Exactly. He thought I was kidding him and he laughed his head off."

"We should worry about Peter's sense of humor," Eileen spoke with her mouth full.

"He declares Malachy died stone broke."

"Humph! It's our turn to laugh."

"He says there's something queer about that money. . . . I never could understand it, myself, with me a total stranger to Malachy, you might say. Peter got him his first job, with the Department of Public Works in Oakland, and helped to bury him at the last. He swears Malachy never laid up a dollar in his life."

Dan Cassidy leaned forward and eyed his wife curiously. "What's his idea? Does he think there's some mistake?"

"Mistake nothing!" Eileen cut in sharply. "Banks don't make mistakes except in their own favor."

"I don't know. He worried me with his talk. I made him promise to come back and see you, Dan.

Wouldn't it be our luck if it wasn't my cousin Malachy at all and if there's another Sheila Cassidy? God forgive me for such thoughts! And yet those letters from the bank were ——"

"Peter would do well to mind his own business," said Cassidy with a frown. "Malachy may have played the races, for all he knows."

Eileen nodded vigorously. "Sure! Or maybe he ran a little cutting plant in his basement. Just a case a day to keep the doctor away. All a poor man needs nowadays is some labels and a cellar. It's time the Irish gave some competition to the Wops. But wait! . . . Don't speak. I'm thinking. . . . Oh, my Lord! I'll bet he's right. . . . I *know* he's right!"

"*Do* you, now?" her mother exploded. "You read the past, the present and the future, don't you? You're the smart aleck of the family. Why don't you open a palm-reading parlor, Madame Thebes?"

"Don't call me smart: I'm not even bright. Gee, I've got a head like a hammer!" The speaker rose and rushed from the room, her parents heard her at the telephone. Dan Cassidy would have followed her but his wife had grown pale and she showed symptoms of an approaching "spell"; so he hurried for the aromatic spirits of ammonia. Apprehension had seized his helpmate, she wanted to know if she had laid herself liable to arrest by appropriating money belonging to another.

"Well, Cousin Peter said something. He bears out my opinion of relatives," Eileen proclaimed when she returned to the dining room. "Now don't get panicky: it's all right. I started to call Sam Lee but I knew he wouldn't tell me anything, so I called Mr. Carter."

"I heard you asking something about Lee Ying. You don't mean ——?"

"I do. I was a fool not to guess, but I made Mr. Carter tell me. Gee, I've got a marble top!"

"Lee Ying!" The father was astounded.

"That old Chinaman!" the mother gasped. "God rest his soul! He was always doing something nice."

In much excitement Eileen explained, "I happened to think it was fifty thousand dollars those blackmailers tried to nick him for, and how he asked me a million questions about the family—your people, and everything—and it came over me in a flash. There's Chinese gratitude for you! Dear, generous old Lee Ying."

Dan Cassidy was still in a good deal of a daze, but finally he said: "Sure, that's like a Chinaman: once your friend, always your friend. But I'm not surprised. He always thought highly of me, and no wonder—I treated him like an equal."

"An *equal,* Dad?" Eileen smiled queerly. "That dear old man was a blessed saint: he was head and shoulders above any white man I ever knew."

Alanna Wagner should have been completely cured of her breakdown by this time but she was not. Her strength returned slowly and she could not manage to take interest in anything, her efforts to recuperate were spiritless and perfunctory and in consequence she was something of a disappointment to herself and a very real source of worry to her father.

He had purposely avoided all reference to the happenings on that night when her illness had reached its crisis, for he did not like to recall them and he prayed devoutly that they would never become known to her; therefore he was immensely dismayed when she languidly told him one day that she considered it a pretty mean trick on Sam Lee's part to bring her back to life after she had so agreeably passed out. It would have been so much simpler, she said, to let the chapter end right there than to struggle on with it to an anticlimax, drinking quarts of milk and eating nauseating foods just because they were nourishing and taking evil-tasting tonics between meals. Sooner or later, it would all be to do over again, anyhow.

Wagner learned by judicious questioning that one of the nurses had let her tongue wag, so he discharged her and determined to have a heart-to-heart talk with his daughter as soon as it was safe to do so. In that conversation he promised himself to be ruthless, frank and to make an end of this affair, once for all.

Such an opportunity occurred this evening. They had been discussing plans for the future and for once Alanna appeared to be in a pliant and an agreeable mood: she acceded to his every suggestion and assured him of her willingness to do anything or to go anywhere he wished: she was ready for anything from a West Indies cruise to a walking tour through the leading cemeteries of Europe. In her present mood she rather leaned towards a series of intimate visits to famous tombs and burial places but Albert should have his way, as usual.

He began, after a few well-rehearsed preliminaries leading up to the subject, by assuring her that he realized exactly how matters stood between her and Sam Lee. He was deeply sympathetic but it was a hopeless situation and she must make up her mind to face it.

Alanna listened with a faint glow in her dark eyes. "Um-m! You've finally decided to operate, eh, Doc?" Then when he raised his brows: "Oh, I've seen you scrubbing up and getting ready for days. You're going to cut clean and deep and either kill or cure me. Is that it? Well, where's the ether cone?"

"Call it an operation, if you like. You must know it's utterly impossible to go on like this. There's absolutely nothing to be done and you're merely making yourself miserable by brooding over the fellow."

"Something *could* be done," she told him listlessly, "if I had the courage of a whippoorwill."

"What?"

"Precious jelly fish, I could shut my eyes and marry him. I wish I had the grit, but—jelly fish don't have grit, do they? Nothing to hold it in."

"You couldn't even do that, not after what I'm going to tell you. I hate to shock and disappoint you, and it sounds awfully hackneyed to say he isn't worthy of you, but it's true. He's a rotter. He has gone to smash. He's a dissolute, dissipated ——"

"Darling! You tempt me to defy the world."

"I got the surprise of my life that night I went looking for him. I always figured he had some pride and decency: I assumed he was a Chinese gentleman, whatever that may be, but he isn't. D'you know where I found him? In a rotten Filipino dance hall! The most terrible place I ever saw."

"Yes? Where? Tell me about it."

Wagner acceded willingly enough to this request, in considerable detail he described not only that "hell-hole" on Riverside Drive, as he called it, but also the other haunts he had visited in company with Sam's valet. The picture he painted was vivid enough: Alanna listened with interest. When he had finished she astounded her father by saying:

"Poor Sam!"

"'Poor Sam!' Good Heavens, he needs no sympathy! He's having a wild time with those white girls. . . . *White* girls! And yellow men! Imagine it. That filthy joint sickened me. I never saw anything so disgraceful, so vile and degraded."

"I wonder if it's any worse than some I've been in. Have you seen those black-and-tans in Harlem?"

"Never. What are they?"

"Colored dance halls. They're quite the smart thing and everybody goes. Patronized by big people in the small hours, if you know what I mean."

"Did—*you* go?" Wagner gasped.

At Alanna's nod he swore colorfully and with eloquence until she exclaimed: "Naughty, naughty words! Pitty out, Albert, or muvver will wash its mouf! . . . Remember I'm still your daughter and blasphemy is horrifying to one of my age. . . . Yes, I went everywhere: tried everything, but it didn't work. Sam's doing the same: I know all about him. I hear every day. . . . Now don't jump at conclusions. I haven't spoken to him and I don't intend to."

"Then how ——?"

"He asked a friend to telephone the nurse and report to him on my condition. He couldn't do any less, could he? Well, I got her on the wire finally—she's a girl he grew up with—and we've become good pals. She was here to see me this afternoon. I think she's in love with him, too, so we have plenty to talk about."

After a moment Wagner said more calmly and with a real sincerity of feeling:

"I'm awfully sorry, dear. You don't know how miserable it makes me to see you unhappy. But—

what are we going to do about it? Nothing. I wish I could help you break the thing up, but ——"

"I broke it up once, in the only way possible," Alanna smiled forlornly, "but you and Sam spoiled it. Let's not talk any more about it. Run along, now, and amuse yourself. Please!"

The father began a protest but she insisted. "Toddle off to your club or go and see the second act of some show. I'm tired and I'd rather be alone. Honestly!"

"Very well," Wagner stooped and kissed the thin, listless face of his daughter. "I'd like to help you fight it out, if I could and if you'd let me. You're all I care about and I'd give everything I have to see you happy. You're hurt—awfully hurt—and I'd kill anybody that dared to hurt you but—I'm helpless. Gosh! When you look at me the way you do lately I want to cry. I—I'd rather have you mad at me than like this."

For a while Alanna tried to read, but the book was heavy: her eyelids were heavy, too, and her brain was weary. She was tired all over, and yet the doctor pronounced her well. How stupid doctors are. Fixed despondency like hers, she assumed, not infrequently led to a permanent mental unbalance, and she should make an effort to shake it off. On the other hand, insanity might be a relief: as a matter of fact, it would be rather nice to be pleasantly demented and have a comfortable padded cell of her own. Padded in lavender. . . . How useless

of Sam to try and forget: she had been through all that. The thing to do was to keep on remembering until you went blooie and couldn't think any more. . . . Rotten luck for two people who had everything——

Her telephone rang and with an effort she lifted it. Eileen Cassidy was calling her but in such a flutter of excitement that Alanna did not at first recognize her voice. Even then it was hard to understand her. Speaking of insanity, this Cassidy girl was plainly cracked, mad as a hatter: there was no sense at all to what she was saying. A white man? Sam a white man? The poor child was daft: hysterical, too, for her voice was shrill, she was laughing and choking and her words fairly piled up on the wire. Sam was not Lee Ying's son! That old Chinese importer was not his father——! No, Eileen was probably all right, it was merely her own reason that had fled.

Alanna clung dizzily to the instrument; her mouth turned dry and she could utter nothing except broken and inadequate sounds: her ears began to roar until she completely lost what was being said to her.

Well! It didn't take long to go giddy when a person started. A moment ago she had been sane enough, now she was in the midst of the most fantastic mental tumult—— And yet the Cassidy girl was actually speaking: that was her voice: this telephone was cold and solid and she didn't feel at all strange in her head. She was awake, right enough:

the lights were burning, her heart was beating. It was beating terribly, as a matter of fact, and she had stopped breathing, but otherwise she was perfectly normal.

"Wait! Please ——!" she managed to gasp. "I don't understand half of it. Say it over again, slowly."

"Sam is an adopted child, or practically that. Anyhow he isn't Lee Ying's son."

"I—can't believe it. How do you know?"

"It's the strangest thing. No wonder you think I'm raving. Well, a relative of mother's came to see us tonight, he's here now. His name is Daly, Peter Daly, and he knew your father when he was a Police Inspector in San Francisco. You see Lee Ying came from there and Cousin Peter knew him, too. He says Sam was a foundling. Lee Ying picked him up on his doorstep when he was no bigger than your thumb. There's no mistake about it. That explains everything, doesn't it? I mean about Sam's looks and —— . . . Hello! . . . Hello!"

"Yes."

"Did you hear?"

"I think so. What does he say—Sam? Why hasn't he told me?"

"He doesn't know. I called his house a minute ago and he's out. Then I called you."

"Are you—*sure?*"

"About the news? Good Heavens, yes! That's why I'm so frantic to find him to-night. Peter's sail-

ing the first thing in the morning and it would be dreadful if —— Sam's off hitting it up somewhere, I suppose. No telling when he'll be back: maybe not until late, maybe not at all. He ought to know right away."

"Yes. Yes, of course. Father must know, too. . . . Could you come up here right away and tell him? . . . I—I'm shaking so I can't hold on —— Oh, Miss Cassidy, p-please come!"

"Why, sure. . . . Now, don't let go of yourself. Stop it! . . . Wait till I get there and we'll cry together. . . . No, you're not dreaming. You're very much awake. . . . We'll find Sam somehow. It all came out because Lee Ying left some money to mother and we were telling Cousin Peter —— Oh, it's too wonderful!"

Alanna did not remember who had the last word because for once she completely lost control of her emotions: she laughed and she cried, she stuttered and she choked: she found herself gabbling wildly at the telephone even after she had replaced the receiver on its hook.

That mental upheaval did not last long, but it served to galvanize her into something like her old self and she began to dress for the street almost before she realized why. Tears were still flowing and she was talking aloud when she faced her mirror and pulled her hat down. Sam was white! This nightmare had ended. She'd find him. He was probably at that place on Riverside Drive and, thanks

to her father, she knew exactly where it was. She must hurry! Why did those tears keep streaming? Nothing to cry about now. Why, she was a poor wet sponge. Out all night making whoopee with those dance-hall girls, eh? Indeed! She'd snatch him away if she had to wreck the place. It wouldn't be the first time she —— Yes, and if he ever dared to touch another girl, she'd—she'd fix him. The dissolute wretch! The darling! Who were those female warriors who rode out and seized their men and brought them in across their saddles? Amazons! She was a bit weak in the legs and underweight for an Amazon, but that didn't matter. She laughed uncertainly as she let herself out of her room and hurried down the hall to the elevator. A wobble-kneed Amazon. Gosh! What a kick Sam would get out of this!

Her father's circumstantial description of that Asiatic club enabled her to find it without difficulty and she was admitted readily enough when she arrived there. The smiling Oriental on the door told her that Sam Lee was inside.

From the floor above came a babel of voices and the sounds of a restless, moving crowd. There was a reception room at the right of the entrance hall, which was now used as a smoking lounge, and there several undersized Filipinos were grouped around a white girl: they were talking animatedly and one of them had an arm around her. Alanna paused in the doorway and looked in: they turned

eager faces towards her and when she moved on towards the stairway a couple of them followed her.

An orchestra started playing, the dancing floor was filled with couples when the visitor mounted to its level: she pressed forward until a Japanese in dinner clothes halted her. There was an air of authority about him and she rightly assumed him to be the manager.

"Hello!" he said. "You desire seeing me?"

"Yes. I'm looking for Sam Lee."

The fellow eyed her inquiringly. "Ah! You friend of Mister Sam Lee? You acquainted of Mister Sam Lee?"

Alanna nodded impatiently, eagerly she scanned the moving throng. Her pursuers from the smoking room were at her side now and both men were asking her to dance: she ignored them and spoke again to the manager:

"I must see him at once. Tell me where he is."

"What for you ——?"

"It's a matter of importance. Quick! I'm in a hurry."

One of the Filipino boys addressed her brokenly but she disregarded him until he seized her hand, slipped his arm about her and undertook to guide her into the revolving crowd. She resisted, a couple collided with them and profiting by the confusion she escaped only to find herself in the embrace of his companion.

"Let go, please," she said. "I'm not dancing."

"What's the matter you no dance?" queried the manager. "No other business is engaged here but dancing."

"I'm not able —— I don't feel like dancing. Really I must see ——"

"What you come here for? Maybe you representing Police Department? Everything here is conducted excellently."

"No, no! I'm a friend of Mr. Lee's and I must speak to him."

"So? Well, I don't see him to-night."

"But I'm sure he's here. The man at the door just told me ——"

"Mister Sam Lee is not here."

This conversation had been carried on not without difficulty, for Alanna's Filipino admirers were insistent and they continually interrupted her: other patrons, too, were attracted by her appearance for she was pretty, she was young, she was new. Several men, not all of whom were Filipinos, spoke to her, there sprang up an eager rivalry for her favor. Alanna was accustomed to servility from Asiatic men, but these fellows were anything but servile, they were not even polite: they almost fought over her, and she was crowded this way and that. They were intemperate in look, in speech and in action and a strange drunkenness possessed them. She began to feel utterly helpless and more than a little bit frightened. The proprietor was plainly suspicious of her and her appeals only evoked a shrug:

he gave her to understand that she could either behave herself in a becoming and agreeable manner or get out. Then he made off.

The handling of men had never been much of a problem to Alanna Wagner, she had never experienced the slightest difficulty in keeping the most impetuous of her acquaintances within bounds, but these were not men such as she had known. They were grimacing apes, repulsive jumping jacks with grotesque yellow faces, and every one of them was obsessed with the desire to lay hands upon her. They were excitable, and they leered at her, pawed at her. No doubt they realized her bewilderment, and assumed she was some innocent who had wandered in here by mistake. This inflamed them the more. Beasts! This wasn't New York, or Riverside Drive: it was Manila, Shanghai, Yokohama, and she was alone. These fellows did not propose to let her go.

Her heart was pounding horribly and it hurt her. She wanted to strike out at these grinning, lustful faces. She was growing faint, too, and there was no breath in her lungs. But she couldn't faint here: not among these animals. The very thought terrified her. What a fool she had been to come here: she should have sent her father or waited —— A wave of blackness rose and threatened to overwhelm her but she fought it down. If she lost consciousness here, what would happen?

In desperation she stretched herself higher and

looked over the crowd. She saw Sam almost at once: he was coming down the stairs from the floor above, but her thin cry was lost in the hubbub. He paused to light a cigarette and at that moment the music stopped: Alanna screamed his name again and pushed towards him. But her knees bent, her bones were like rope and her strength was feeble. A fine Amazon she was! A—swooning warrior. Never mind, he had heard her: he was charging in her direction, casting couples aside, spinning them out of his way. She could see the top of his head. . . . She was growing numb and that black wave was rolling over her again. . . . No need to fight it down. Sam was coming. . . . The room, the world was revolving, it was falling away and she floated over it. Higher and higher she was borne. Nice and comfortable up here riding on a cloud with Sam. Nothing to worry about with his arms around her. . . . Alanna sighed in exquisite contentment.

CHAPTER XXI

THAT downy cloud upon which Alanna rode ran aground, it began to bump and to jolt her roughly. A flat tire probably. What filthy luck. A voice was calling her over and over: it was Sam's, and he was shaking her. How rude of him! . . . Why was he rushing her through a blinding flicker of lights and shadows? The film had run off its sprockets perhaps, anyhow the whole theater was rocking and swaying. . . . Pshaw! This wasn't a theater, she wasn't riding on a cloud: this was a taxicab. Yonder was the glow of the meter and the back of the driver's head. . . . That air felt good and those incandescent flashes that came and went were—street lights. Certainly. Whizzing street lights and this was Sam at her side. Probably she had fainted.

"Yes, you fainted." It was Sam's voice speaking. "Thank Heaven you're better! Do you hear me, Alanna? I'm taking you home and everything is all right."

The motion of the cab was stimulating: Sam was rubbing her hands and slapping them, he was fanning her with his hat, too. Her senses returned with a rush.

"I remember now. . . . How did I get away from that place and—those men?"

"I carried you out. In God's name tell me how you got there? What a—a terrible fright you gave me."

Alanna was fully conscious at last. Life had skipped a beat or two, she had faltered and missed a step, but it was running again and she was swinging along with it as usual. Feeling fine, too. How silly of her to faint.

"Sam!" she broke out. "You're white! *White!* That's why I went there."

"Yes, yes! We'll be home in a minute."

"I'm all right, honestly! I couldn't wait to tell you and—the man is sailing in the morning, so I had to hurry. There's nothing in the way, no barrier at all. Oh, Sam! Sam! You're not Lee Ying's son. It's a mistake. You're white, *white, white!* Don't you understand?"

The listener was aghast. This was dreadful. Poor sick child! And they had declared she was well. The liars! "I understand," he said soothingly. "But please don't excite yourself. Close your eyes, we'll be there in a jiffy."

"No, no! Listen to me." Alanna struggled out of his arms, agitated words poured from her lips, there was a wildness in her voice and in her bearing that told its own pitiful story. She clutched at him and shook him feebly, babbling meanwhile some-

thing about Eileen Cassidy, a Police Inspector, San Francisco, Lee Ying, a white baby.

How could he face Albert Wagner? How could he explain where he had encountered Alanna? Questions like these raced through Sam's mind. It was bad enough to find her in that infamous resort, but this was ten times worse. In a way he was relieved to realize that she was out of her mind, otherwise his shame at being discovered there would have overwhelmed him. Her escape from the hotel would take some explaining, he fancied. Wagner was probably frantic. The whole thing was too unfortunate, too dreadful to think about. For instance, that crazy idea that obsessed her. Well, he had saved her reason once, perhaps ——

He pricked up his ears and turned a startled face towards her for she had ceased her gibberish and was speaking to him in a normal, conversational tone.

"Sam! Quit shushing me. If you don't stop treating me like a lunatic I—I'll let out a yell. I'm not delirious: I'm as sensible as you are. . . . Think that over for a minute. Look at me! . . . Do I look demented? . . . All right. I'm trying to tell you something of the greatest importance to both of us and it won't register. It sounds wild, I know, and too dramatic for any use but it's true."

"Alanna!" he cried in a choking voice. "If you're not out of your head, then I am."

"That's better! I was getting mad by the minute.

I thought you'd go up in the air, but—the whole thing is a failure. Now then, I'll give it to you in a medicine dropper: take it slowly. A relative of Eileen Cassidy's, by the name of Daly, is in New York and he declares you're no more a Chinese than he is."

"Absurd! I can't believe it! What proof is there?"

"Proof enough, I fancy: we'll find out when we get to the hotel. All I can do is repeat what she told me over the telephone."

This the speaker proceeded to do and by the time she had finished they had arrived at their destination. In a daze Sam paid the driver and assisted Alanna into the hotel: he felt sure that this hallucination would be broken at any moment.

It was a half hour later. In the parlor of the Wagner suite, Mr. Peter Daly, spurred on by Eileen, had told his story in minutest detail and none of his listeners had followed it more closely than Albert Wagner. The speaker concluded by saying:

"There's no possible doubt about it. Dunne gave me his report on it at the time, and we talked it over later; how he saw Lee Ying pick the little fellow up on his doorstep and how the old man and his wife insisted that he had been sent in answer to their prayers. Dunne is still alive, he'll be glad to verify everything I've said. Mr. Wagner, you know something about the Chinese: they put great faith in their

gods—the good ones do, and Lee Ying was devout. He and his wife were uncommonly religious. But the looks of Sam there is enough to prove what I'm telling you. He's no Chinese."

Eileen offered substantiation by declaring. "I knew Sam's father—I mean Lee Ying—better than anybody. He was my dearest friend. He always called Sam a 'Son of the Gods'. He declared he was more than a son: the Princess of the Colored Clouds had sent him. I used to wonder what he meant but now I understand."

"As a matter of fact, Dunne nearly got himself into a jam over the thing by talking too much," Daly continued. "I was on the desk at the time and knowing Lee Ying was high caste and rich and a fine gentleman, we figured the lad would have a good home and amount to something. But some of the mission workers heard a rumor and began asking questions. They'd have taken him away and put him into a public institution so as to make a Christian out of him. Two to one he'd have turned out a yegg. Lee Ying got wind of it and came to see me in great trouble of mind and soon after he moved here to New York. That ended the matter. Why, I remember the kid well, dressed up like a little mandarin, with a red button in his cap and his hand in the old gentleman's. He was one of the sights of Chinatown and the politest kid you ever saw."

Curiously Sam inquired: "Who am I?"

Daly shrugged. "My guess is no better than yours. Nobody ever claimed you. We picked up a good many waifs but mighty few of them amounted to anything. Whoever you are, I guess you must have good stuff in you."

"My father disbelieved in heredity. He used to say that the virtue of a vase lay not in the clay but in the potter's skill."

Eileen's eyes were shining and she spoke with conviction: "They have fairies in Ireland, why not in China? Lee Ying was the wisest man in the world and he knew things we'll never understand. He called you a superior being, a Prince. I think he was right."

"And so do I," Alanna said softly. She drew closer and laid her cheek against Sam's sleeve.

Daly smiled and then looked at his watch. "Well, it's getting late and that's all I can tell you. I'm mighty glad that I happened along in time to help two heart-broken lovers, although the truth was bound to come out sooner or later. Mr. Wagner, it looks to me as if it's about time to say, 'Bless you, my children!'"

The father rose, laid a kindly hand upon Sam's shoulder and said in a tone of utmost sincerity, "I can't see that it makes any great difference who you are or what you are, my boy. The only thing that concerns me is Alanna's happiness. I've been terribly sorry for both of you kids."

Chinatown, always late in closing its eyes, was asleep when Sam Lee ceased pacing the walks of his garden and stared down into the empty canyons beneath him. Dawn was not far away. So, he was a white man! Lee Ying's virtuous acts had lived after him, his dead hand had reached forth from the grave and unveiled the truth. This night had marked an epoch in Sam's life and yet the significance of it failed to stir him as it should: there was something anticlimactic about it and the disclosure which should have stirred him to the bottom of his being left him almost unmoved. That was, no doubt, because he had spent his whole life anticipating something of this very sort. What did provoke a genuine tumult in his soul, of course, was the result of that disclosure. There indeed was something stunning, something overpowering, and he wondered if it, too, might not be the work of that beneficent spirit which looked after him. Lee Ying, the man of many mercies, the doer of thirteen hundred kindly deeds. Was this his final sacrifice? . . . Much luck, great riches and high honor were what Sam's auguries had foretold and they had come true, but in reality, all those blessings had flowed directly from Lee Ying's hand: he, Sam, had done nothing to warrant them, he had not even proved himself worthy to receive them.

He was glad to know that he was white, nevertheless an odd resentment smoldered in the back of his mind; it offended him to gain stature through

that fact alone. In what way was he better now than he had been at sundown? Yesterday he was the son of a gentle, a noble, a charitable and a godly man, to-day he was a guttersnipe, and yet he had attained caste. His honors had multiplied. His Princess has opened her arms. Lee Ying's blood was not his, in him ran the blood of some drunken roustabout, perhaps, or some furtive jackal of the slums. The mother who had borne him was not Pan Yi, of blessed memory, but for all he knew, an unwed woman of the streets. In that he must take pride. Great credit now attached to him. Chinese gods appreciate humor: doubtless they were smiling broadly.

During these several hours he had been saying farewell to Chinatown, to this high-perched home and all its deities, for with the coming of sunrise a new life for him would dawn and he realized that henceforth he would be as much out of place here as he had been elsewhere. It had been a sad, a wistful parting: it had meant the tearing up of tender roots—how tender he had never suspected until now. As he had walked here under the stars he had been aware of a tall, familiar figure at his side; it had moved step by step with him. Their souls had met.

How high Lee Ying towered over other men. What other son had known a father such as he? . . . Father? No. His father was a shadow, a nameless, formless, fanciful creation in the mind of

a man named Dunne. . . . Who was the wiser, the more to be trusted, Lee Ying or that policeman? Which of those two understood the power of the gods? . . . . Truth! Where shall one search for it, in the mind or in the heart? In which of those two men should he rest his faith?

Sam entered his house and went on into his own chamber. Slowly, meditatively, he disrobed and purified himself; then he put on his ceremonial Chinese robe, his cap with the ruby button, his white hose and silken slippers. On silent feet he moved to the door of that shrine where Lee Ying had bent in worship to his gods. He slid the panel back, stepped inside and closed it behind him. The enigmatic image stared at him from fixed, inscrutable eyes.

He lit the joss sticks and watched the thin blue lines of fragrant smoke arise, then he knelt before the golden tablet on the wall and bowed his head.

When he spoke it was in the sing-song language he had learned at the knees of Pan Yi:

"Oh, Benevolent One to whom I owe all joy and happiness, and whose virtues I revere, my prayers float Heavenward to you. In this still hour of the dawn your unworthy son is beset by loneliness and yearning, his love and his longing beat him to the ground. He gropes in darkness, the path is blind, the forest is black and demons of doubt infest it. Make him to know the permanence and the reality of truth. Cleave to him as he clings to you.

"You have resigned your earthly dignities and you walk clear-eyed beside the bright waters of Celestial streams, all wisdom and understanding is yours. Pause, I beseech you, and plant deep in my heart the roots of faith in the reality and the eternity of our oneness. Out of nothing you created me, you clad me from your bounty: I paid you back in grief and disappointment but my soul is sick and it calls to you. A pearl is but a temple built by pain around a grain of sand: around the jewel of your love for me I pledge myself to build a stately monument to my enduring trust in you."

THE END

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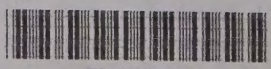
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